Identifying Best Practices for Facilitating Access to Higher Education for Latina High School Students in Georgia

A Dissertation submitted
to the Graduate School
Valdosta State University

in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in Adult and Career Education

in the Department of Adult and Career Education
of the Dewar College of Education and Human Services

July 2016

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ABSTRACT

Despite Latinas' increased representation in K-12 public schooling, they continue to be underrepresented at the level of higher education. Very little attention has been placed on helping Latina high school graduates make the transition to higher education. A sequential explanatory mixed methods study was conducted in order to identify best practices for providing transition services and support to Latina high school students in the state of Georgia. In order to identify best practices, the researcher examined study participants' transition experiences, the forms of social and cultural capital that they utilized to reach college, and their perception of best practices.

In Phase I, an online survey was completed by 502 participants from 14 colleges/universities within the University System of Georgia (USG). In Phase II, two focus group interviews were conducted at two colleges/universities within the USG; one at each university. The findings from the focus groups were used to explain the survey findings and to further explore the transition experience of Latina high school students in Georgia. The researcher integrated findings from the online survey and focus groups in order to propose a set of best practices for facilitating access to higher education for Latina high school students in Georgia.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must first thank God for giving me the strength, motivation, and desire to complete this dissertation. He strengthened me mentally, emotionally, and physically for this journey. God was with me throughout the many hours that I spent working on this study. He was my comforter and my guide as I embarked upon a task that was arduous and required a lot of sacrifice. I constantly meditated on the fact that, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," (Phillippians 4:13).

I would like to thank my dissertation committee members for their guidance and assistance in this process. Dr. Reynaldo L. Martinez (committee chair) I have great appreciation for the guidance that you have provided to me on this journey. Dr. Regina Suriel, thank you for taking me under your wings and being a great mentor to me. Dr. Carl Hand, I appreciate the time that you provided to helping me analyze my research. Yes, my study was like a two for one deal. Dr. Diane Wright, thank you for the diverse insight that you brought to the committee.

I would like to express my sincerest thanks to all of the Latina undergraduate students at colleges and universities across the state of Georgia who participated in my study. This study could not have occurred without you. Thank you for sharing your experiences on your journey from high school to college. I am honored by the opportunity that you gave me and humbled by your experiences and the barriers that you crossed in order to get to college.

I want to give special thanks to individuals who went out of their way to help me at the different colleges/universities: Zelda Ray at Kennesaw State University; Alma Young and Betty McCorvey at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, the Department of Multicultural Student Affairs at the University of North Georgia, Dr. Jodi Johnson at Dalton State University, Jason Parker at Georgia Southern University, and the IRBs at Georgia Gwinnett College, Valdosta State University, and the University of Georgia.

I am especially thankful to Maria Loza who inspired my research. I am thankful to you and your parents for allowing me to be an extended member of your family. You have great strength, courage, and determination. You will accomplish your dreams! I am so proud of the woman that you have become and I cannot wait to attend your college graduation.

Lastly, I want to thank my family for their emotional support and encouragement on this journey. Diane Kenny, thank you for all of the ways that you helped me, believed in me, supported me, and made life easier as I traveled this long journey. I am so thankful to my parents, Ulysses and Fairy Gear, for being my biggest fans and praying for me and believing with me. Thank you for pouring love, determination, discipline, and good work ethic into me as a young child by the life that you lived. Thanks to my siblings, Carla, Stanley, Sheila, and Tracey for your love and encouragement. To my nieces and nephews: Crecy, Chelsie, Cortel, Trevor, Kiersten, Karter, and Tyler. I look forward to spending time with you.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

"The bridge to the 21st century for this country will not be built without equity in education for Hispanic Americans—that is, without "leveling the playing field" for all who are part of the educational system," (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence, 1996, p. 9). The previous statement was made in 1996 by Ana Margarita Guzmán, the Chair of the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. Still today the playing field has yet to be leveled for Latinas/os in America. In 2014, there were over 27 million Latinas and it is estimated that by 2050 they will represent at least 25% of all females in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015; Maes, 2010). Latinas were the fastest growing racial/ethnic group of females, yet they remained the most underrepresented in higher education (Contreras, 2011). Latinas had the lowest educational attainment of any other group in the country and they were the least represented in the workforce. According to the Labor Council for Latina American Advancement's (LCLAA) *Trabajadoras* report of 2012, Latinas were more likely to be employed in low-skill service occupations, which provided low income that kept them living at or below the poverty level (Sanchez, Delgado, Villa, Vetterolf, & Velasquez, 2012). Thus, their children also lived a life of poverty. Low educational attainment created a complexity of negative life circumstances for Latinas, their children, and the generations that followed. On a larger scale, it was predicted that the United

States could suffer the negative consequences for the low educational attainment of Latinas at the price of decreased economic growth and further social inequality (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2012; Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

One could agree that the issue of Latina educational attainment was not due to a break in the educational pipeline at just one point, but at several places. Latina high school graduates were enrolling in higher education at higher rates than in the past, but the access gap had yet to be closed. It might also be easy to assume that Latinas were not attending college because they did not value education, but this was not the case. Latina students strongly desired to achieve the elusive "American Dream." Past and recent research studies have shown that Latinas/os had very high aspirations for higher education, but there was a major disconnect between what they desired to do and what actually happened after high school graduation (Hurtado, Sáenz, Santos, & Cabrera, 2008). Most had not made this vital transition. According to one National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), 97.4% of Latinas/os "hoped" to attend college, but only 57.6% proceeded to higher education, which was a continuous trend (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Over the past 30 years the college attendance rates of Latinas increased dramatically, but these increases were not proportionate to their population growth, and they continued to lag behind their White and African American counterparts. Current research indicated that the primary barriers to higher education for Latina/o high school graduates were a lack of information about the college application process, college entrance requirements, and financial aid (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gonzalez, Stein, Shannonhouse, & Prinstein, 2012; McWhirter, Valdez, & Caban, 2013). The reality was that most Latina/o high school

students were not receiving the transition services and supports necessary to transition to higher education.

Latina/o educational attainment and access to higher education has always been an issue for Southwestern states like California, Arizona, and Texas, but it was now a prevailing issue for Georgia, which had the tenth largest population of Latinas/os. The southern state's lack of infrastructure to adequately support its Latina/o population increase of over 400% since 1990, further perpetuated the access gap (Gonzalez et al., 2012; Verdugo, 2006). Unlike California, Arizona, and Texas, Georgia did not have a history of addressing the needs of a large Latina/o population, which also played a role in the negative impact on the educational attainment of Latina/os in the state (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atiles, 2005; Verdugo, 2006). Overall, Georgia had one of the lowest educational attainment rates in the United States and people of color in the state fared even worse. In retrospect, Georgia had a long history of inequity, racism, and discrimination towards people of color; namely African Americans (Bohon et al., 2005). Researchers have observed that Georgia continued its legacy of racism and discrimination towards people of color through the enactment of English-only laws and anti-immigration legislation intended to target Latinas/os and inhibit their progress in the state (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002). Georgia had one of the highest Latina/o dropout rates in the country in 1998 (Bohon et al., 2005; Valenzuela, Garcia, Romo, & Perez, 2012). In 2011, Georgia's educational attainment rate for Whites was 40.5% while the rate for Latinas/os was 16.7%, which indicated a 23.8% gap (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2011). This historical lack of attention and services for minorities decreased the chances of Latinas gaining access to higher education in the state.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is that the United States (U.S.) educational system has placed very little attention on transitioning Latina high school graduates to higher education, which has resulted in the underrepresentation of Latinas at this level of education. Latinas remain underrepresented in higher education despite being the fastest growing racial/ethnic group of females in the U.S. (Bernal & Elenes, 2011; Maes, 2010). There is an apparent break in the educational pipeline that inhibits Latinas' transition to higher education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe best practices for providing transition services and supports to Latina high school students in the state of Georgia. In the process, the transition experiences of Latina undergraduates will be explored, which will provide information about the social and cultural capital that they used to reach higher education.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What are Latina students' experiences in transitioning from high school to higher education?
2. What are the forms of social and cultural capital that Latina students identify as helping them to transition from high school to higher education?
3. What are the perceived best practices for transitioning Latina high school students into institutions of higher education?

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks for this study are the Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit) and the community cultural wealth model. These two models complement each other in this study by revealing inequity and opposing it at the same time, which will provide the foundation and context for this study. The Latina/o critical race theory is relevant to this research study because it addresses the inequity that is wrought in the educational pipeline for Latinas/os. LatCrit is a subcategory of the critical race theory (CRT) that mainly focuses on Latina/o oppression by the dominant, White majority versus the oppression of African Americans (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). LatCrit is important to this study because addressing the issue of college access for Latinas in Georgia cannot be done without confronting the state's history of racial discrimination and how it has marginalized and characterized Latinas/os as nothing more than field laborers (Zarate & Conchas, 2010). As a result, Latina/o students have been declared as "deficient" in the social and cultural capital necessary to successfully navigate through the U.S. educational system and reach higher education. The value in the social or cultural capital of people of color has always been based upon its comparison to that of the dominant society – White America. Latina/os have been consistently portrayed as "lacking" educational values, "lacking" parenting skills, and "lacking" the skills necessary for reaching higher education (Aguirre, Martinez, & Barboza, 2013; Hamann, Wortham, & Murillo, 2002). The Latina/o culture has been devalued to the extent that they are considered at fault for their own educational achievement and attainment gaps (Valencia, 2010; van Wormer, 2004; Yosso, 2005).

Despite these declarations, institutional agents throughout the U.S. consistently failed to provide Latina/o high school students with the information needed to gain access to higher education while also placing them in academic situations which also inhibited the acquisition of vital positive social networks. This form of institutional abuse created a barrier to increasing Latina/o educational attainment which in turn prevented their upward social and economic mobility (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Contreras, 2011; Valenzuela, 1999). This systemic limitation of access to social capital perpetuated social inequality, which resulted in a "return deficit" (Lin, 2001) for Latinas in their efforts to increase their educational attainment.

In spite of the socially stratifying practices of schooling, which created barriers to higher education, there were Latinas who were still navigating their way to higher education. A small percentage of Latinas all over the country were defying the odds by making educational accomplishments that much of society believed they did not have the social or cultural capital to achieve. Latinas who were accessing higher education were either able to gain access to valuable social networks or they were using other resources. The question is what resources were they using? A framework that allows insight into the social and cultural capital that Latinas used to transition higher education is vital to this study in order to describe the best practices for providing transition services and supports to Latina high school students in Georgia.

The Community Cultural Wealth model will guide the investigation of this phenomenon by addressing the role that Latina/o cultural wealth played in the ability of Latinas to access valuable resources that led to a successful transition higher education. The Community Cultural Wealth model is a framework that challenges racist nativist

framing by shifting the focus away from "cultural deficits" and instead focusing on the cultural wealth of people of color (Yosso, 2005). Though commonly used in research pertaining to college access, the social capital and cultural capital theories failed to reveal or address the value of the social or cultural capital of people of color. These two theories encourage deficit thinking and helps re-establish historical misconceptions about people of color's ability to succeed in life. The Community Cultural Wealth Framework functioned on six tenets that addressed the different types of capital that Latina/o students were endowed with that yielded positive results for them in education despite the many barriers that they faced in the educational pipeline. The six tenets addressed by the framework are aspirational capital, social capital, familial capital, navigational capital, linguistic capital and resistant capital. Yosso (2005) described each of the principles of community cultural wealth as follows:

1. *Aspirational capital* refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers.

2. *Social capital* can be understood as networks of people and community resources. These peer and other social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions.

3. *Familial capital* refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition.

4. *Navigational capital* refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Historically, this infers the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind.

5. *Linguistic capital* includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style.

6. *Resistant capital* refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality. This form of cultural wealth is grounded in the legacy of resistance to subordination exhibited by Communities of Color. (pp. 77-80)

Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Framework encompassed the valuable social and cultural capital that students of color used to help them move through the educational pipeline and successfully reach higher education. The framework acknowledged racial inequality while revealing the cultural wealth in people of color, which empowered Latinas/os while educating others. The Community Cultural Wealth Model is appropriate for this study because of its focus on the value of the Latina/o culture versus the cultural deficit approach that is commonly used in research studies pertaining to Latina/o educational attainment studies (Yosso, 2005).

This mixed methods study aims to describe best practices for providing transition services and supports to Latina high school students in Georgia. The use of surveys and focus groups in this mixed methods study will give voice to Latinas by giving them the opportunity to provide insight into their experiences transitioning from Georgia high schools to higher education. The two methods of inquiry will also allow the revelation of the social and cultural capital that helped Latinas persist to higher education. Collectively, the Latina/o critical race theory and the Community Cultural Wealth Framework will complement each other in this investigation in their joint fulfillment of the social justice tenet of the critical race theory.

Definitions of Key Terms

In this research study there are key terms that are used repeatedly and require clarification. The conceptual and operational definitions are as follows:

Access Gap – Latinas' disproportionate lack of access to higher education, when compared to white females, which creates a gap evidenced by underrepresentation in higher education.

Aspirations – A students' desire to achieve high levels of education beyond high school, which is more than they actually expect (Bohon, Johnson, & Gorman, 2006).

Cultural Capital – "An accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society" (Yosso, 2005, p. 76).

Educational Attainment – Progression through the education system in terms of K-12 and higher education (Verdugo, 2006).

Higher Education – For the purpose of this study, higher education is defined as attendance at 2-year community colleges and 4-year universities.

Institutional Abuse - "Actions by institutional agents that discourage or produce barriers for college attendance. Such actions include (a) being emotionally discouraging, (b) providing inaccurate information or insufficient knowledge, (c) withholding critical information, and (d) limiting access to opportunities for college" (González, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003, p. 153).

Institutional Agent – This term refers to "individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit directly, or negotiate the transmission of, institutional resources and opportunities" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 6). School guidance

counselors, teachers, school administrators, college recruiters, social workers, and college recruiters are considered to be institutional agents.

Institutional Neglect – "The inability or unwillingness of schools or its personnel to prepare students for postsecondary education, particularly 4-year universities" (González et al., 2003, p. 153).

Latina – A female of Spanish ancestry. See *Latina/o* definition.

Latina/o – A term that denotes Spanish ancestry of a male or female, but is heterogeneous in that it entails several different cultural groups based upon an individual's country of origin or their home culture (Torres-Saillant, 2005; Wallesrstein, 2005). In the U.S. these groups include individuals from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and various countries of Central and South America. Though Latina/o is used as an umbrella term, each group tends to be diverse in terms of their educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and political and religious backgrounds (Torres-Saillant, 2005; Wallesrstein, 2005). In the state of Georgia, the Latina/o population is mostly comprised of individuals of Mexican origin.

Social Capital – The term refers to resources available to an individual through direct and indirect social ties; through social networks and associations (Lin, 2001). These resources do not belong to the individual but they are benefited by temporary use of the resources.

Latino – A male of Spanish ancestry. See *Latina/o* definition.

Transition Services and Supports – This is defined as services and supports provided by an institutional agent, normally a secondary guidance counselor, to

students and parents about college preparation that includes information about requirements, applications, and financial aid (Downs et al., 2008).

Delimitations

Delimitations of this study are as follows:

1. The researcher could not control for extraneous factors, such as socioeconomic status, parental level of education, or other personal attributes.

2. U.S. Citizenship will not be considered as a variable in the study.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are as follows:

1. The study will be only confined to public 2-year and 4-yr colleges and universities in the state of Georgia.

2. The study participants' responses in the survey and focus groups will be based upon and confined to their personal perceptions, experiences, and reflections on transitioning from a Georgia high school and into a public, Georgia institution of higher education (2-year or 4-year).

3. The participants will be from public institutions of higher education (2-year and 4-year) in Georgia with a Latina/o student enrollment of 4% or above, thus the survey will not be conducted at every 2-year and 4-year college in Georgia.

4. The study will solely provide the Latina perspective on the transition services and supports provided and needed to reach higher education and should not be generalized to other females of different ethnicities.

5. The potential for researcher bias will exist in the interpretation and analysis of qualitative data. The researcher has had experience acting as a transition agent for Latinas at the high school level.

Assumptions of the Study

The main assumption of this study is as follows:

Survey participants and focus group participants will respond to questions truthfully and to the best of their ability.

Significance of the Study

Latinas/os were the fastest growing population in the U.S., which made them the largest ethnic minority group (Aguirre et al., 2013; Contreras, 2011). According to 2014 population statistics, Latinas represented 49.4% of the total Latina/o population and 56.0% of Latinas participated in the workforce in the U.S., which made increasing their educational attainment a national concern (Maes, 2010; Sanchez et al., 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). It was predicted that by 2050, Latinas would make up almost one-fourth of all women in the U.S. If the access gap persisted both Georgia and the broader U.S. would bear the astronomical economic consequences of creating a large segment of the workforce who would be low-skilled and underclass (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Maes, 2010; Verdugo, 2006). The lack of intervention to increase the educational attainment of Latina students would ultimately lead to the U.S.'s inability to compete in the global market and the continuation of social inequality for people of color (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2012; Contreras, 2011).

This study is intended to provide research-based data to inform the policies and practices of high schools and institutions of higher education in Georgia and the larger

community, as well as other new immigrant states, about the transition services and supports necessary to successfully transition Latinas to higher education. This research study is also important to more fully understand the plight of Latinas in the educational pipeline in the state of Georgia while also revealing their cultural wealth. The results of this study will add to the body of knowledge because there is limited research on the state of high school transition services for furthering the educational attainment of Latinas in the southeastern U.S. The majority of the research studies available on transitioning Latina/os to higher education and closing the access gap have been primarily based in California and Texas, which have historically had the highest populations of Latinas/os in the U.S. There is a need for more research to investigate which transition services and supports are provided by high schools of new immigrant states, like Georgia, that actually help Latina high school students reach higher education (Bohon et al., 2005; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013).

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Past and current literature (Durán, 1983; Gándara et al., 2013; Maes, 2010; Sanchez, Delgado, Villa, Fetterolf, & Velasquez, 2012) has indicated that Latinas are underrepresented at institutions of higher education in the U.S. The research concerning this phenomenon has mainly been conducted in California, Texas, and Arizona, and little is known about newly emerging immigrant states like Georgia. The majority of the available research studies on access to higher education are focused on the general Latina/o population in the U.S. Due to this trend, there is limited research-based data available on the specific transition experience of Latinas from high school to higher education in newly emerging immigrant states (Cervantes, 2010; McWhirter, Valdez, & Caban, 2013).

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to describe best practices for providing transition services and supports to Latina high school students in the state of Georgia. In order to describe these practices, this study will explore the forms of social and cultural capital that Latina undergraduates in Georgia used to access higher education. This study will add to the limited body of knowledge on effective practices for helping Latina high school students in Georgia access higher education.

The review of literature presented in this study provides an overview of the foundation of research studies upon which this study is built. These research studies

highlight significant findings about access to higher education for Latinas. The topics covered in the review of literature are access to higher education, aspirations, barriers to higher education, social and cultural capital, transition services and supports, community cultural wealth, Georgia as a newly emerging Latina/o state, and LatCrit.

The Latina Condition

In 2014, Latinas made up 49.4% of the total U.S. Latina/o population of an estimated 55.3 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). As the largest racial/ethnic group of females in the U.S., their educational attainment is highly important to the viability of future generations and for the health of the U.S. economy (Gándara et al., 2013; Sanchez et al., 2012). Nationally, Latinas demonstrate higher academic achievement and college enrollment than Latinos. Despite these gains, a focus on Latina access to higher education is important because Latinas are the cornerstone for the next generation.

Research indicates that the academic achievement of children is highly dependent on the educational attainment of their mothers (Durán, 1983; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gándara et al., 2013). Mothers are consistently identified by Latina/o youth as the key source of encouragement and support for education (Gándara, 1995; Liou-Antrop, González, & Cooper, 2009; Luna & Martinez, 2012). In the Latina/o family, the mother is charged with teaching the children and instilling them with values for life (Valdés, 1996). Latina mothers are pillars of support for their children.

Children living in households headed by Latinas are more likely to live in poverty, which in itself creates barriers to academic achievement (Sanchez et al., 2012). Access to higher education needed to be increased for Latinas because higher educational attainment equates to higher pay. Degree attainment is extremely important, because the

wage gap for Latinas is the highest of all races and genders with the same level of education and occupation. Latinas and African American females, as women of color, suffer the greatest wage inequality in the U.S. (Center for American Progress Action Fund, 2013; NWLC, 2015; Sanchez et al., 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). In 2014, Latinas earned 61.1 cents for every dollar earned by a White man while White women earned 81.8 cents for every one of these dollars (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). There was only a 2.1 cent increase for Latina/o females from 2012 to 2014. The economic conditions for women of color were even worse in Georgia where Latinas only earned 48.4 cents for every dollar a White man earns and African Americans earned 63.4 cents for every dollar (NWLC, 2015). Latinas had the lowest wages in the state. The Fair Pay Act of 1963 and the Lilly Ledbetter Pay Act of 2009 have not been able to wipe out wage inequality, which was also rooted in racism.

In terms of wages, Latinas have found themselves suffering from double layers of inequity; race/ethnicity and gender (Cervantes, 2010; Sanchez et al., 2012). The fact that Latinas started out at a wage deficit makes increasing access to higher education and increasing educational attainment imperative for increasing the viability of future generations. Individuals with higher levels of education are less likely to be unemployed (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Latinas cannot afford to forfeit higher education, because their human capital has been undervalued. Thus, they are paid lower wages than all other females and males, regardless of ethnicity (Sanchez et al., 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013).

As the fastest growing racial/ethnic group of females in the U.S., if Latinas maintain their status of having the lowest educational attainment the future generations

will suffer (Gándara et al., 2013; Sanchez et al., 2012) the consequences while the cycle of achievement gaps, attainment gaps, and access gaps will continue. According to Maes (2010), Latinas have triple minority status because they are female, a minority, and they tend to have low socioeconomic status. Ultimately, their educational and occupational issues are compounded by their ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status, which serve as barriers to upward mobility (Sanchez et al., 2012). This triple minority status could have an even greater negative impact for Latinas in new emerging Latina/o states.

Access to Higher Education

"Educational attainment for most Hispanic Americans is in a state of crisis," (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence, 1996, p. 16). This was one of many key findings from research conducted by the president's advisory commission in 1995. Access to higher education had increased significantly for Latinas/os since that time, but these gains have come slowly and are insufficient when compared to the overall growth of the Latina/o population (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Hurtado, Sáenz, Santos, & Cabrera, 2008; President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence, 1996). Contreras (2011) referred to this disproportionality between population growth and college enrollment as the "brown paradox."

Due to rapid population growth Latina/o youth now represented approximately 22% of all students enrolled at the K-12 level, but their presence at the level of higher education had not increased at the same rate (Contreras, 2011). In the 10 year period between 1990 and 2000, the enrollment of White students at the K-12 level declined by 2.1 million, but their college enrollment rates continued to be higher than Latinas/os and

African Americans (Contreras, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2014). These statistics indicated inequity in access to higher education for Latinas/os.

Latinas/os have a long history of struggle for equitable access to higher education that dates back before the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. In 1972, the national college enrollment rate for 18 to 24 year-olds was 25.5 % and increased to 38% in 2004 (Verdugo, 2006). During this same period, Latina/o enrollment rose from 13.4% to 24.7%, while Whites' enrollment increased from 27.2% to 41.7% (Verdugo, 2006). Patterns of small growth in college access for Latina/o students showed progress, but it was not enough to fill the gap.

In 2014, 16.5% of Latinas/os were enrolled in higher education in comparison to 14.5% of African Americans and 58.3% of Whites (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015). Latina/o students had higher enrollment at 2-year colleges and the lowest average enrollment at 4-year universities, which was consistent with their enrollment trends (see Table 1). Both Latinas/os and African Americans had higher participation in proprietary (for-profit) schools than other categories, which could indicate the presence of institutional policies that were more accommodating. Overall, students of color continued to be underrepresented in higher education.

Table 1

Fall 2014 U.S. College Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Public		Private (non-profit)		Private (for profit)	
	2-yr	4-yr	2-yr	4-yr	2-yr	4-yr
Latinas/os	23.0	14.6	14.3	10.0	24.4	13.8
Blacks	14.7	11.8	27.3	13.2	28.3	30.6
Whites	52.1	62.3	50.2	66.4	38.3	45.1

Note: Adapted from "Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by control and level of institution, level of enrollment, and race/ethnicity of student: 2014," by the National Center of Educational Statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_306.50.asp

In September of 2013, the Pew Hispanic Research Center reported that the Latina/o high school graduating class of 2012, enrolled in college at a higher rate than their White counterpart. The Latina/o graduating cohort's actual enrollment rate was 49%, which exceeded White enrollment by 2% (Pew Research Center, 2013a). No celebration was warranted due to this report. This percentage of enrollment was aligned with the historically disparate college going patterns that Latinas/os have experienced for decades. The pattern of educational attainment for Latina/o students has been that half will reach high school, half of them will graduate, and about half of those graduates will advance to higher education (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Villalpando, 2010).

Despite the small victories made by Latinas/os in their efforts to access higher education, decades of research have revealed the presence of breaks in the educational pipeline at each level of education (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Villalpando, 2010). The pathway to higher education is not seamless for Latinas/os. The

systemic nature of inequity inherent to the educational system creates barriers to higher education which limits the educational attainment of students of color in the U.S. Regardless of breaks in the educational pipeline and the often invisible effects of inequity, Latina students have continued to aspire to achieve the American Dream (Contreras, 2011).

Aspirations

Highlighting current research studies on aspirations is important for dismantling myths about why Latinas are underrepresented in higher education and lag behind their White and African American counterparts. Critics have alluded to the idea that the access gap is due to a lack of interest by Latina/o students (Valencia & Black, 2002), but the research tells a different story (Burciaga, Huber, & Solorzano, 2010; Menacker & Pollack, 1971; Valencia & Black, 2002). Latina/o students and their families value education, which is one of the key reasons why many immigrated to the U.S. -- better educational opportunities for their children (Calaff, 2008; Contreras, 2011; Foxen, 2010; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Latina/o parents often share the same aspirations for their children due to their desire for them to have a better life and move up in the world (Downs et al., 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2011; Harklau, 2013).

Current research studies indicate that Latina/o students have very high aspirations for higher education despite being underrepresented at this educational level (Burciaga et al., 2010; Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). In one qualitative study, researchers interviewed Latina/o tenth graders from a rural high school in the southeastern U.S. and found that "hope to finish college" was a core idea among participant responses (Gonzalez, Gabriela, Shannonhouse, & Prinstein, 2012, p. 88).

McWhirter, Luginbuhl, and Brown (2014) conducted a survey of 401 Latina/o students from high schools located in a northwestern state to find that the majority of those surveyed planned to enroll in college after graduating from high school.

Latina/o students express the desire to attend college as early as middle school and their parents often desire the same for them (Burciaga, Huber, & Solorzano, 2010; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gándara, 1995). In a study of eighth grade student aspirations, Mexican origin Latinas/os had high aspirations despite having low socioeconomic status (Burciaga et al., 2011). Studies have also found that Latina/o students' aspirations increase as they progress from ninth grade to twelfth grade (Gándara, O'Hara, & Guitiérrez, 2004; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; McDonough, 1997). A ninth grade cohort of students were surveyed to find that only half of the Latina/o students specified the desire to attend college compared to 61% of their non-Latina/o peers, but by the time these same Latina/o students reached the twelfth grade 80% of them desired to attend college (Gándara & Contreras , 2009). These delayed aspirations could likely be due to a lack of information about college opportunities.

The results of a nationwide mixed methods study found that 80% of the Latina respondents had big dreams of professional careers that included graduating from college (NWLC & MALDEF, 2009). Cervantes' (2010) interviews with Latinas revealed their high aspirations to attend college and how their parents encouraged them to do so. More specifically Latinas have demonstrated higher aspirations than their male counterparts (Burciaga et al., 2011; Contreras, 2011; Hurtado, Sáenz, Santos, & Cabrera, 2008). The aspirations of Latina/o students have allowed them to continue to strive to reach higher education (Foxen, 2010). Unfortunately, there is often a mismatch between Latina/o

students' aspirations for college and their actual future attendance due to various barriers (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009; Perna & Kurban, 2013).

Barriers to Higher Education

The paradox between the high aspirations and low college enrollment of Latinas/os is not solely due to the individual because this phenomenon is not common to a few, but to the majority of Latinas/os. An apparent barrier exists when statistics indicate that Latinas have a strong desire to attend college, graduate from high school, but do not reach this next level of education. This paradox warranted the need for the identification of specific barriers to Latina college access.

Many research studies indicated that school-related barriers to Latina/o students' transition to higher education included a lack of information, financial aid, teacher support, and transition support from counselors, apparent racial discrimination, and anti-immigration policies (Perna & Kurban, 2013; Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). These education-related barriers have singularly and collectively prevented many Latina/o high school graduates from furthering their education at the collegiate level. These barriers contributed to the increased underrepresentation of Latinas/os despite their high aspirations for higher education.

Lack of Information

The lack of information was one of the most common barriers to accessing higher education. Research findings indicated that most Latina/o high school students had no knowledge of college admission requirements and were unaware of the procedures involved with applying for college admission or financial aid (Bohon, Macpherson, &

Atiles, 2005; Burciaga et al., 2010; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; McWhirter, Luginbuhl et al., 2014; Perna & Kurban, 2013). Latina students with limited knowledge of admission and eligibility requirements have decreased chances of making the transition to higher education. One study found that Latina/o high school students in the spring of their senior year had lower access to college information than their White and African American counterparts (Martinez & Cervera, 2012). Students in this situation potentially could exclude themselves from attending college due to the misconception that their grades or abilities are insufficient for admission. This was found to be a common situation for Latinas who had low self-confidence and questioned their abilities despite exhibiting high academic achievement in high school (NWLC & MALDEF, 2009).

According to Bohon et al.'s (2005) focus group study conducted in Georgia, Latina/o parents and their students did not understand how U.S. educational institutions functioned and were often unaware that they were eligible to attend college. Many Latina/o students did not know about admissions requirements, how to apply, or what their full college options were. Delayed information-seeking by Latina/o high school seniors in Martinez and Cervera's (2012) study partially explained the overrepresentation of Latinas/os in 2-year colleges and their overall underrepresentation in higher education. It is apparent that the lack of information was a barrier that could limit Latina/o students' college options or prevent their overall college access.

Information about access to college is vital to the future success of Latina/o high school graduates. Throughout the U.S. educational system there is a push to get students to graduate from high school and to attend college, but "every" student is not provided

with the roadmap to entering college. High school students who are White, middle to upper class, and have taken advanced coursework are more likely to receive information on how to get into college (Welton & Martinez, 2014). Latina/o and African American students are underrepresented in higher education and are more likely to live in or near the level of poverty, and yet they are the least likely to have received college information (Contreras, 2011; Welton & Martinez, 2014). The transition from high school to college for Latinas is not smooth, but is full of potholes, obstacles, and missing road signs. The conditions of transition that Latinas must endure are the reason that only a few make it to college, though many have high aspirations to attend (Contreras, 2011; Flores, 2010).

Findings from McWhirter, Valdez et al.'s (2013) focus group study of 41 Latina high school students indicated that school-related barriers to higher education were a lack of access to resources, discriminatory attitudes by teachers and peers, and substandard English as a Second Language (ESL) programming that was inadequate for college preparation. These Latina students expressed a lack of knowledge about college financial aid and limited to no support from their teachers and counselors. McWhirter, Valdez et al. (2013) stressed the need for more research on the effectiveness of transition supports and services so that best practices could be established for helping Latinas transition to higher education.

Gonzalez et al. (2012) interviewed tenth grade Latina/o students from a rural high school in the Southeast to find that both students and parents lacked information about how to get into college. The Latina/o students in the study could not perceive the presence of institutional barriers, but internalized their educational struggles through self-blame. The teachers and counselors of the high school in this new emerging community

did not offer transition assistance to these high school students, which served to isolate them in the school environment. Gonzalez et al. (2012) implicated the need for more research on Latinas/os' lack of information about college planning.

Financial Aid Availability

"They should give more scholarships to Latino students. We have a lot of potential, but money can hold us back" (McWhirter et al., 2014, p. 11). The availability of financial resources is a key factor that determines whether Latina high school students enroll in higher education and their choice of college (Contreras, 2011; Diaz-Strong, Gómez, Luna-Duarte, & Meiners, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Perna & Kurban, 2013). Research indicates that students that lack information about financial aid are less likely to seek admission to college (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Perna & Kurban, 2013). Latina/o parents often overestimate the cost of higher education by two or three times the true cost when they have not been provided with adequate information (Contreras, 2011). The results of a survey conducted by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute found that Latina/o students were the least knowledgeable about financial aid and 75% of those surveyed who were not in college stated that "they would have been more likely to attend if they had known about financial aid" (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 244).

Students who are unaware of the procedures for applying for financial aid or other scholarships are faced with the struggle of paying out-of-pocket (Gándara et al., 2013; McDonough, 1997). Undocumented students are not eligible for any form of federal financial aid and often lack information about scholarships that they may be eligible for through Latina/o organizations (Bohon et al., 2005; Burciaga et al., 2010; Diaz-Strong, Gómez, Luna-Duarte, & Meiners, 2011). These students are youth who are foreign-born,

were brought to the U.S. by a parent/guardian or have an expired visa, do not have a lawful presence in the U.S., and are provided with few routes to citizenship. In most states, these students are required to pay out-of-state tuition regardless of graduating from a high school and long-term residence within their states (Bohon et al., 2005; Contreras, 2011; Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). Thus, the affordability of the community college often makes it the institution of choice for Latina/o students (Contreras, 2011; Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; McDonough, 1997).

Another financial barrier was the recent increase in the cost of college tuition. The rising cost of attending a college or university has continued to place higher education out of reach for Latinas/os and African Americans (Contreras, 2011; Heller, 2013). Heller (2013) found that wealthier students with poor academic performance were just as likely to attend college as students with high academic achievement and parents with low income. There is less need-based financial aid available while merit-based financial aid has increased significantly (Contreras, 2011; Heller, 2013; Finney, Perna, & Callan, 2012). This situation ultimately decreases the financial dollars available to Latinas/os because they tend to have low socioeconomic status, gaps in achievement, and disparate access to advanced or honors courses in high school (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

For example, Georgia's HOPE (Helping Outstanding Students Educationally) scholarship is merit-based and has modified eligibility requirements from only having a 3.0 grade point average to also being required to have credit for two courses of academic rigor beginning with the high school graduating class of 2015 (Georgia Student Finance Commission, 2012). According to HOPE guidelines, rigorous courses are defined as

Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or other advanced coursework such as chemistry, physics, or calculus. The required courses of academic rigor will increase to three for the class of 2016, and to four for the class of 2017. Latinas/os are often tracked into low-level courses and have remained underrepresented in advance courses, which places the HOPE scholarship further from their reach (Contreras, 2011; Contreras & Gándara, 2009).

Over the past 10 years the price of college tuition has skyrocketed while the availability of need-based aid in the form of grants has declined and merit-based aid has increased (Contreras, 2011; Finney, Perna, & Callan, 2012). This situation has left the option of student loans. Latina/o students are debt averse and are the least likely group to utilize this type of financial aid (Contreras, 2011). According to the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) for 2011-2012, the average accumulated undergraduate loan amount for Latinas/os was $7,611.90, which was the lowest of all other racial/ethnic groups except for Asians (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). The NPSAS also found that only 48.9% of Latina/o undergraduate students used loans to finance their education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Attendance at 2-year community colleges is more affordable and can be paid for out-of-pocket, which makes it a viable option for Latina/o high school graduates (Diaz-Strong, et al., 2011; McDonough, 1997). Thus, the percent of Latinas/os students using loans and the average amount of those loans are lower because most of them attend community colleges versus the higher priced 4-year college/university. Being informed about financial aid is essential for helping Latina/o high school graduates gain access to higher

education and research continues to show that Latina/o secondary students lack such information (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Perna & Kurban, 2013).

Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination has been a persistent barrier to reaching higher education for Latinas/os in the U.S. The patterns of poverty, achievement gaps, and limited access to higher education that have plagued people of color in the U.S. are rooted in racism. The stories of racism for Latinas/os have been historically concentrated in the Southwest while those of African Americans have been concentrated in the South. Despite the Civil Rights Act of 1964, covert and overt forms of racial discrimination have continued to impact these two groups. The impact is strongly evidenced by the history of disparate educational achievement by Latinas/os and African Americans that determine their future outcomes. As the largest ethnic minority group in the U.S., Latina/o presence has increased in parts of the country outside of California, Texas, Arizona, and Florida, but the experience of racial discrimination for the group has not changed in the newly emerging Latina/o states (Beck & Alexsaht-Snider, 2002; Browne & Odem, 2012; Luque, Bowers, Kabore, & Stewart, 2013; Martinez, 2002; Murillo, 2002). Various research studies have revealed systemic racism in educational settings that serve as barriers to academic achievement and prevent successful progression to higher education for Latinas.

Latina/o students experience various forms of overt and covert discrimination inflicted by institutional agents and non-Latina/o peers on a daily basis. As indicated by research, the most prevalent forms of discrimination towards Latina/o students in U.S. public schools are isolation, tracking, low expectations, lack of support, and ridicule

(Bohon et al., 2005; Foxen, 2010; González et al., 2003; McWhirter et al., 2013; Villenas, 2002). The daily marginalization of these students made them feel inferior and unwelcome in their school environment. Latina students from various focus group studies indicated that their teachers refused to acknowledge them when their hand was raised (Foxen, 2010; Bohon et al., 2005; González et al., 2003). A student from a newly emerging immigrant state reported being told by school authorities to "go back to your country and eat rice and beans…frijoles," (Foxen, 2010, p. 24).

The symbolic violence of discriminating against a group on the premise of language (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) was evident in many Latina/o students' responses (Foxen, 2010; González et al., 2003; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013). Foxen's (2010) focus group study titled, *Speaking Out: Latino Youth on Discrimination in America,* revealed that Latina/o high school students participating across all four study sites (i.e., Tennessee, California, Maryland, and Rhode Island) had been either reprimanded by teachers or insulted by non-Latina/o peers for speaking Spanish at school. An immigrant Latina/o respondent indicated that U.S. born Latinas/os had ridiculed them for not being able to speak English fluently (Foxen, 2010). "Shut up and speak English, this is America!" one student recalled being told (Foxen, 2010, p. 18). Another student reported being forced to pay her teacher 25 cents every time she spoke Spanish (Foxen, 2010).

Latina/o students across several studies indicated unnecessary placement into ESL (English as a second language) classes, which relegated them to low-level classes and left them ill-prepared for college (Foxen, 2010; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; McWhirter, Luginbuhl et al., 2014). Tracking into low-level classes also prevented access to information about college preparation and other valuable social networks (Cavazos &

Cavazos, 2010; Foxen, 2010). One Latina/o expressed that he did not find out that he needed to take the SAT until his senior year while other students had been taking the test since their junior year (Foxen, 2010). Low expectations expressed by teachers and administrators, placement in low-level classes, and racial discrimination by non-Latino peers created a poor learning environment for Latina/o students. These conditions further exacerbated feelings of isolation, which could ultimately lead to students giving up and dropping out.

In school climates that practiced covert discrimination students did not report unequal treatment, but instead they blamed themselves and others around them for not seizing opportunities to do well (Gonzalez et al., 2012; Welton & Martinez, 2014). Welton and Martinez (2014) noted that students of color did not sense unequal treatment even when they were able to identify that White students were highly represented in Advanced Placement (AP) classes and students of color were mainly placed in regular classes. The students explained this phenomenon away by blaming students of color for not wanting to work hard (Welton & Martinez, 2014). This is a prime example of how Latina/o and other students of color will internalize racial stereotypes and project them on themselves and peers without recognition. Latina/o students commonly experienced internal oppression, which led to self-blame, low self-esteem, and depression (Gonzalez et al., 2012; Stanton-Salazar, 2002). Students in this state of mind are very likely to demonstrate poor achievement or drop-out of school which is self-fulfilling prophecy (Foxen, 2010; Rodriguez, 2013; Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

A resounding expression from Latina/o students was that institutional agents at their school did not understand the Latina/o culture (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002;

Foxen, 2010; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013). There was a lack of understanding that there were different ethnicities of Latinas/os. Institutional agents and non-Latina/o peers believed that all Latinas/os were Mexican when they actually originated from Puerto Rico, Guatemala, or El Salvador (Foxen, 2010). Regardless of being born in the U.S., the general consensus was that Latina/o students were undocumented or "illegals" (Foxen, 2010).

The brief overview of each of the previously mentioned studies confirmed the presence of covert and overt racial discrimination that was exhibited in the form of isolation, low expectations, tracking, inferior treatment, and an overall lack of cultural awareness by institutional agents (Bohon et al., 2005; Foxen, 2010; Gonzalez et al., 2012; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; Valenzuela, 1999; Villenas, 2002; Welton & Martinez, 2014). Regardless of which point in the educational pipeline discrimination occurs, it can have equally deleterious effects on Latinas/os' aspirations and progression towards higher education. The reality is that the pervasive nature of institutional racism does not only exist in high schools, but exists at every level of education, government, and in the workplace (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ortiz & Telles, 2013). The studies addressed are only a snapshot of perceptions and cannot be generalized, but their findings indicate that racial discrimination is a barrier to higher education for Latina/o students.

Anti-Immigration Policies and Laws

The strong anti-immigration sentiment in the U.S. has not provided undocumented Latinas/os and their families any level of comfort. The U.S. Congress failed to pass an adequate immigration reform act that would allow the option for citizenship. Congress did not pass the proposed national DREAM (Development, Relief,

and Education for Alien Minors) Act that was first introduced to Congress in 2001 (Feasley, 2011). As of May, 2014, thirteen states had passed their own DREAM Act with Florida and Virginia included as the two most recent states to pass such legislation (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014).

Anti-immigration policies and laws have presented a major barrier to accessing higher education for undocumented Latina/o high school students. These policies and laws exacerbate all other barriers that students may face because they affect every part of an immigrant student's life. These laws also impact the future of native-born Latinas/os with undocumented parents. Anti-immigration laws have placed uncertainty and the fear of deportation in the hearts of many immigrant Latinas/os. In the past 10 years, Arizona, Georgia, and Indiana passed laws prohibiting in-state tuition for undocumented students at state colleges/universities (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). Alabama and South Carolina went further by enacting laws that banned undocumented students from attending any state college/university (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). Georgia only prohibits undocumented students from attending their five most selective public universities. The laws of these states limit future possibilities for undocumented Latinas/os while there are at least 18 states that allow in-state tuition for these students.

Undocumented students find it very hard to make plans after high school graduation because of not knowing whether they can actually attend college. In their study of educational opportunities in Georgia, Bohon et al. (2005) found that many immigrants were unaware that they could even attend college, which left post-graduation plans unclear. It is very common for undocumented students to feel that getting a high

school diploma is useless because they do not see the possibility of higher education and often drop-out (Bohon et al., 2005; McWhirter, Ramos, & Medina, 2013; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009). Research indicates that being undocumented or not having "papers" poses several uncertainties for high school students that aspire to achieve more than their immigrant parents (Foxen, 2010; Maxwell, 2012; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011).

A survey study of 475 Latina/o students, ages 14 to 19, revealed that undocumented status had a significant effect on students' future goals due to anticipated problems (McWhirter, Ramos, & Medina, 2013). McWhirter, Ramos, and Medina (2013) found that Latinas/os who anticipated undocumented status problems were significantly less likely to plan to pursue a 2-year or 4-year degree than someone without these anticipations (81.5% vs. 88.6%). This survey study also confirmed the uncertainty experienced by undocumented Latinas/os when trying to make post-high school plans. College-bound Latinas who anticipated problems related to immigrant status were more likely to pursue a 2-year degree rather than a 4-year degree. Therefore, 2-year community colleges are more feasible options for undocumented students due to affordability and easier admission (Diaz-Strong, Gómez, Luna-Duarte, Meiners, 2011; Heller, 2013). It is imperative that immigration reform be passed to insure Latina/o access to all colleges/universities in the U.S., which will help raise the overall educational attainment of the group (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; McWhirter, Ramos, et al., 2013; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011).

The impact of anti-immigration policies on mixed-group families can also be devastating. Most Latina/o students in the public school system are native-born, but over

half of them have parents who are immigrants (Contreras, 2011). The deportation of primary caregivers is very common and places the future of Latina/o children left behind in jeopardy (Foxen, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). One Latina student dropped out of high school "…because her mother – the primary caretaker who asked her about school and encouraged her academically - had been 'sent back to Guatemala' " (NWLC & MALDEF, 2009, p. 11). When mothers are confined to detention centers until deportation there is no one to take care of their children. One native-born Latina high school senior's dreams of college were dashed when the state of Alabama enacted its anti-immigration bill in 2011. Despite having received a scholarship to a college she had to leave the state to go to Mexico with her undocumented parents (Maxwell, 2012).

Overall, Latina/o high school students face many barriers to fulfilling their aspirations for higher education. Again, these barriers include a lack of information, financial aid availability, racial discrimination, and anti-immigration laws and policies. The statistics on the college-going trends for Latina/o students indicate that only a small percentage makes the transition. Latina/o students that do make it are likely able to gain access to valuable social capital.

Social Capital

The acquisition of social capital is essential for helping Latinas overcome barriers that impede access to higher education. Social capital is defined as the resources captured through direct and indirect ties embedded in social networks and connections that can be used for one's benefit (Lin, 2001). This capital can be ascribed by race or gender, prescribed through inheritance (Lin, 2001, p. 55) or it can be acquired through

transition services and supports provided by institutional agents in the educational setting (González, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003). The focus of this study will be on social capital acquired through the transition services and supports will be placed on social capital. The lack of information about college and financial aid, as indicated by research, is evidence that many Latina/o students do not possess the social capital required to make a successful transition to higher education (Bohon et al., 2005; Burciaga et al., 2010; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; McWhirter, Luginbuhl, & Brown, 2014). Their matriculation to the next level of education after high school is hinged upon whether they acquire needed social capital from institutional agents within their high school (González et al., 2003).

Transition Services and Support

Transition services and support are the vehicles for providing high school students with the social capital needed to gain access to higher education. These services and support include, but are not limited to, students and parents being provided with information and assistance pertaining to college admission requirements, the college application process, and financial aid. Providing encouragement and advice for navigating the college institution is also within the scope of the services provided. Transition services and supports function within the premise of Stanton-Salazar's (2001) six forms of institutional support:

1. Funds of knowledge – Providing information about college admission requirements, how to apply to college, sources of financial aid, how to apply for financial aid, and what to expect in college.

2. Bridging – Acting as a human bridge to gate-keepers, to social networks, and to opportunities
3. Advocacy – Intervening on behalf of students for the purpose of protecting or promoting their interests
4. Role modeling – Modeling behaviors associated with effective participation in mainstream domains, and effective coping with stratification forces via help-seeking behaviors, and rational problem-solving strategies
5. Emotional and moral support – Provided in the context of other forms of support geared toward promoting effective participation in mainstream domains and effective coping with stratification forces
6. Personalized and soundly-based evaluative feedback advice and guidance – Incorporates the provision of institutional funds of knowledge as well as genuine emotional and moral support. (p. 268)

The availability of adequate transition services for Latina high school students can have a major impact on their post-high school outcomes (Calaff, 2008; Contreras, 2011; González et al., 2003; Gonzalez et al., 2012; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Vela-Gude et al., 2009; Zarate & Gallimore, 2005).

As the gatekeepers of valuable forms of social capital, institutional agents are charged with providing transition services and supports. According to Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995), institutional agents are "individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit directly or to negotiate the transmission of institutional resources and opportunities (such as information about school programs, academic tutoring and mentoring, college admission, and assistance with career decision making)" (p. 117). In

the high school setting the institutional agent tasked with carrying out these vital services are typically guidance counselors though teachers often unofficially serve in this role for students within their classes.

Guidance Counselors

Guidance counselors are important for providing individualized service for helping students achieve their unique educational and career aspirations beyond high school (Perna & Kurban, 2013; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Traxler & Townshend, 1953). The reality of the 21st century is that large student caseloads have created a barrier to students receiving adequate counseling (McDonough, 2005; Perna & Kurban, 2013; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). The American School Counselor Association (2012) reported that the average student-to-counselor ratio in U.S. public schools for 2010-2011 was 471:1, despite the association's ratio recommendation of 250:1.

This ratio recommendation has been the same since the U.S. Civil Rights Commission released a 1974 report on the ineffectiveness of counselors for helping Chicano students in Southwestern schools. The report cited a number of schools for high student-to-counselor ratios (471:1) and for counselors holding racial stereotypes of Chicano students (U.S. Civil Rights Commission, 1974). The U.S. Civil Rights Commission (1974) established the condition of counselor effectiveness as follows:

> How effective are counselors in carrying out their assigned responsibilities?....The view of many experienced in the profession of counseling, however, is that counselors have not been effective. This has been especially true regarding their efforts in counseling the majority of Chicano children. At the Commission's November 1972 Counseling Conference an experienced member of the profession

> frankly conceded: "Counselors are on the whole just not doing a good job with students, particularly Chicano students." (p. 111)

This 1974 report confirms that counselor overload and racial bias is not a new problem, but is an old one that has persisted and is endemic to U.S. public schools in general and not just in the Southwestern schools included in the study at that time.

Limited student access to counselors due to large caseloads is further exacerbated by counselor attention to other tasks. The findings from surveys of high school counselors found that they spent more time on administrative tasks versus providing transition-related guidance to students than they desired (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Large caseloads and excess time spent on tasks outside their scope deems guidance counselors ineffective for providing the services that Latina/o students need in order to matriculate to higher education (Bedolla, 2010; Contreras, 2011).

Guidance counselors are vital resources for Latinas to successfully transition to higher education, but research indicated that they were the least likely source of support for Latinas/os (González et al., 2003; Gonzalez et al., 2012; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; Menacker, 1971; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Historically, the services of guidance counselors have been reserved for middle-class Whites and students with high academic achievement (Pollack & Menacker, 1971). As members of a marginalized group, it is common for Latina/o students with high academic achievement to be overlooked by guidance counselors (Foxen, 2010; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; Vela-Gude et al., 2009).

González et al.'s (2003) study provides great insight into how institutional agents have the power to impact the postsecondary outcomes of two groups of Latinas in very

different ways. González et al. (2003) interviewed 22 Latina undergraduate students from both universities and community colleges to found that the quality of their high school counseling experiences was based upon their academic track. All of the Latinas in the university group reported that during high school they were in the GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) program and took Honors and AP classes. These advanced programs provided them access to specialized counselors who provided support, encouragement, and facilitated their access to higher education through college visits, and quality college information (González et al., 2003).

On the contrary, Latinas from the community college group had a totally different type of counseling experience. Latinas in this group reported being tracked into ESL courses which led to a low-level academic track or being placed in the special education program (Solorzano, 1997). "I never had any support from a counselor to go to college. They never told us anything about the whole application process," stated one Latina (González et al., 2003, p. 163). González et al. (2003) found that Latinas in the community college group had "no contact" with their counselors and those who came close were unsuccessful due to high student to counselor ratios (p. 163). Fortunately, these young women were able to transfer from their community colleges and into the University of California system, which consisted of highly selective universities.

Stark differences existed between these two groups in terms of their access to valuable social capital. The Latinas in the community college group experienced institutional neglect as result of being denied access to needed information about college and being tracked away from college preparatory courses (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Vela-Gude et al., 2009). The positive counseling experiences provided to the university group

were directly related to their affiliation with school programs that are reserved for privileged, White students (Contreras, 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Overall, González et al.'s (2003) study was one of several studies that revealed the systemic stratification of students back into society as a function of the schooling process and how it impacted Latina access to higher education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999).

A featured study in the *American School Counselor Association Journal* titled, "*My Counselors Were Never There,"* presented accounts of the institutional neglect experienced by former Latina/o high school students during their senior year at their perspective Texas high school (Vela-Gude et al., 2009). Individual interviews with 8 Latina/o (5 female, 3 male) undergraduate students from a Texas university revealed the common themes that their high school guidance counselors had low expectations for them, prevented access to advanced level coursework, failed to provide adequate information about college, and were partial to athletes and students from affluent families (Vela-Gude et al., 2009). Except for one respondent who had been in a special high school program and received top-notch counseling, the other seven participants had struggled in their transition from high school to college due to inadequate or no counseling.

Despite the fact that their counselors "were never there," the Latina students in González et al. (2003) and Vela-Gude et al.'s (2009) study managed to navigate their way to higher education. The Latinas in the community college group (González et al., 2003) were likely not able to gain admission into universities directly after high school like the students in Vela-Gude et al.'s (2009) study due to experiencing long-term academic

tracking. The outcomes for these two groups of Latina/o students were exceptional, because the reality is that many Latinas/os have not been able to make it to college under these same conditions.

College-going and non-college going Latinas have very different relationships with their high school counselors in terms of communication. Zarate and Gallimore's (2005) longitudinal study found that Latina college enrollment after high school was positively correlated with teacher perceived academic performance and counselor support. Quantitative findings from a longitudinal study conducted from 1989 to 2004 indicated that college-going (enrolled) Latinas had a much better rapport with their high school counselors than non-college (not enrolled) Latinas who were more likely to feel uncomfortable in their presence. Despite a higher average percent of non-college Latinas dropping in to see their counselors, the majority of the college-going Latinas received advice with explanations from their counselors (Zarate & Gallimore, 2005). Only about half of non-college Latinas received advice with explanations. College-enrolled Latinas also had higher teacher-rated performance than non-college Latinas throughout their K-12 public schooling.

The opportunity gap between these two groups was widened by 74% of the college-going Latinas visiting college counselors compared to only 30% of non-college having this same access (Zarate & Gallimore, 2005). Consistent with previous studies, the non-college group students were likely tracked into low-level courses or experienced institutional abuse and/or neglect, which was evidenced by low tenth grade reading test scores, lower teacher perceptions, university system ineligibility, and a lack of rapport with the counselor (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; González et al., 2003; McWhirter,

Valdez et al., 2013; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Ultimately, these studies provide a clear picture of how this form of institutional neglect can impact Latina/o students' post-high school outcomes.

The previous studies inform current and future practices, but yet Latina/o high school students continue to experience inequitable access to valuable information about college preparation. Six focus groups conducted with 41 high school aged Latina students from three predominately White high schools in the Pacific Northwest revealed the common theme that "counselors were not helpful" (McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013, p. 42). Other studies also showed that the counselors of Latina/o students provided general academic recommendations pertaining to course-taking and credits, but provided little to no individualized support for helping them transition to higher education (González et al., 2003; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; Vela-Gude et al., 2009).

The same theme and findings were revealed in Martinez's (2014) case study of a predominately Latina/o, South Texas high school, in which Latina/o students experienced limited to no access to school counselors for individual support. Students stated that college information in the form of booklets and pamphlets were readily available in the guidance office if they needed it, but they preferred individualized counseling. The counselors were often too busy and as a result, a few students reported being able to get college information or support from a teacher. One counselor stated, "You just can't really give them the help that they should [receive], where you can just sit with them and say, 'Okay, let me help you' " (Martinez, 2014, p. 99). Martinez's (2014) study confirmed the inadequacy of the counselor function as a result of high student-to-counselor ratios.

Guidance counselors in high schools throughout America function as agents of social reproduction when they render services inequitably to students (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). This practice denies social capital to students who need it most; Latinas/os and other students of color. High counselor caseloads also perpetuate institutional neglect due to lack of access to a vital educational resource. Guidance counselors are one of a few institutional agents in the education setting that Latinas can connect with to increase social capital (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). They play a major role in the transition process for Latinas, but what do Latinas do when their guidance counselors neglect or cannot address their college preparation needs?

Teachers

Despite counselors being pre-identified by high schools as the primary provider of transition services and supports, teachers were found to be the school agent of choice for Latinas/os (Martinez, 2014; Contreras, 2011; González et al., 2003; Griffin, Hutchins, & Meece, 2011). Contreras's (2011) study of U.S. schools in various locations found that 44% of Latina/o students considered teachers to be the main source of college information while only 28% considered counselors to be the main college source (p. 33). Latina/o students also considered teachers to be more helpful than counselors for making post-high school plans (Griffin et al., 2011). Technically, teachers are like a secondary resource for providing college information and assistance to students.

The role of a teacher is multifaceted. Many times they act as co-parents, role models, advocates, or beacons of hope for their students. Teachers have the capacity to impact Latina/o students in very positive ways, but this is not always the case (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Their identification as the main source of college information does not

mean that they are effectively disseminating this information to all students equitably. A 1974 report of a study conducted by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission revealed that Latina/o students in Southwestern schools were being consistently neglected in the educational setting, while teachers praised, engaged, and encouraged White students significantly more (U.S. Civil Rights Commission, 1974). Unfortunately, these findings are no longer isolated to the Southwestern states, but have followed Latina/o students across the country and have re-surfaced in current research studies and statistics.

Generally, the teachers of Latina/o students are most likely to be non-Latina/o and middle-class, which presents a significant cultural gap. Teachers have continually held low expectations for Latina/o students which serve as barriers to their academic progress and future educational outcomes (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). A survey of middle and high school teachers revealed that over 65% of them believed that only 25% or less of their Latina/o students would eventually attend a 4-year university (Contreras, 2011, p. 34). These low expectations of Latinas/os also tend to increase as the cultural differences between the teacher and student become greater (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Thus, negative teacher expectations and perceptions often hinder the transmission of valuable college information and support to Latina/o students who need it the most.

The expectations and perceptions that teachers have for Latina/o students often dictate whether college information will be provided to help them gain access to college, which can greatly impact their future educational outcomes. Zarate and Gallimore's (2005) previously mentioned study, found that Latinas with consistently high teacher ratings throughout their K-12 schooling later attended college versus those who received

low ratings (Zarate & Gallimore, 2003). Teacher perceptions of Latina students were found to be a strong predictor for college attendance while academic achievement was found to be an inconsistent predictor (Zarate & Gallimore, 2003). These findings negate the effectiveness of standardized test scores as indicators of future educational attainment because on average students of color do not perform as well on these measurements as their White counterparts.

Furthermore, studies have found that teacher attitude and encouragement for college attendance were major factors for Latinas/os in their journey through high school and into college. Gándara's (1995) study found that almost every Latina in college-prep programs that transitioned to college could recall at least one teacher that encouraged them and helped them believe in themselves. Despite these Latina students being high achievers that later achieved doctoral degrees, the encouragement provided by their teachers was never coupled with information or advice about how to get into college (Gándara, 1995). Surprisingly, teacher encouragement did not automatically come with college information, but it did feed the aspirations of Latina students.

Statistics from the 2002 National Educational Longitudinal study, revealed a strong positive relationship between teacher expectations and how far Latinas wanted to persist in education (Cervantes, 2010). A significant negative correlation was also found between "how far in school a student thinks they will get" and how often Latinas felt put down by the teacher (Cervantes, 2010, p. 42). Latinas who have teachers that communicate high expectations for them are more likely to graduate from high school and continue to college. On the other hand, Latinas who are humiliated by their teachers are not as likely to make it to college, if they can even graduate from high school

(Cervantes, 2010; Foxen, 2010; Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 2001;Valenzuela, 1999; Valenzuela, Garcia, Romo, & Perez, 2012). Teachers have the power to make or break the pipeline for Latinas aspiring for higher education, regardless of their academic achievement.

The consistent patterns of research findings indicate that teachers are helpful to some Latina/o students and not for others. McWhirter, Valdez et al.'s (2013) focus group study on Latinas from three predominately White high schools in the Northwest revealed that some Latinas received individualized transition support from a trusting teacher, many received general advice or information, and some expressed that they lacked teacher support altogether. One entire group of Latinas responding in Spanish indicated that they felt isolated in their school because their teachers did not talk to them and would not help them, let alone provide advice about post-high school plans (McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013). "They just look at us like they think we are stupid," stated one Latina participant (McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013, p. 42).

The responses from Latinas in McWhirter, Valdez et al.'s (2013) focus group study were consistent with research findings indicating that teachers have especially lowered expectations of Latina/o students who have not acculturated and maintain their native language (Valenzuela, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). The treatment of these Latina students was not isolated to their school, but was a common problem for Latinas/os throughout the U.S. (Foxen, 2010; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009). The teachers' attitudes and actions of avoidance and marginalization of these students are symbols of institutional abuse that prevents student access to vital resources, which limits their

educational opportunities. These experiences of institutional abuse create cracks in the educational pipeline that inhibit Latina students from accessing higher education.

The educational opportunities that Latina/o high school students experience are often based upon their academic track. Various research studies show that many teachers provide college information to Latina/o students based upon their academic achievement (Perna & Kurban, 2013; Zarate, Sáenz, & Osguera, 2011). Latina/o students who exhibit high academic achievement through enrollment in Gifted, AP (Advanced Placement), Honors, or IB (International Baccalaureate) courses are more likely to report that their teachers encouraged them, believed in them, and provided them with college information (Cavazos & Cavazos, 2010; González et al., 2003; Martinez, 2014; Welton & Martinez, 2014; Zarate, Sáenz, & Osguera, 2011). The persistent practice of tracking Latina/o students into ESL and low-level tracks has led to their underrepresentation in advanced courses, which makes them unlikely benefactors of teacher-provided college information (Burciaga, Huber, & Solorzano, 2011; Carter & Segura, 1979; Cavazos & Cavazos, 2010; Contreras, 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; U.S. Civil Rights Commission, 1974; Welton & Martinez, 2014).

More specifically, in González et al.'s (2003) study, interviews with two groups of Latina undergraduates revealed that the quality of their experience with teachers in high school were vastly different. The group attending community colleges had all been tracked into general education, ESL, or special education, which did not prepare them for college. Most of the Latina students in this group reported poor experiences with their teachers, which were characterized by low expectations, humiliation, isolation, and discouragement for higher education.

In contrast, the group of Latinas attending 4-year universities had all participated in advanced courses (i.e., AP, GATE, Honors, IB, etc.), which facilitated their access to teacher-provided college preparation information and other valuable information that would assist them in life (González et al., 2003). One Latina university student responded, "Some of the GATE teachers became like friends to us, not just the student teacher relationship. Most of the teachers really cared…." (González et al., 2003, p. 160). The two groups of Latinas experienced very different levels of teacher support.

Cavazos and Cavazos (2010) further supported González et al.'s (2003) findings in their study involving Latina/o college students who had been in AP courses and non-AP courses during high school. College students who had taken AP courses reported having "excellent" teachers that held high expectations for them while those who were in non-AP courses gave an opposite report. One non-AP college student recounted, "My teachers would judge me on my GPA and that would hurt me. 'You're not in AP. You're not in an AP class, so therefore you're not smart' " (Cavazos & Cavazos, 2010, p. 102). This comment is symbolic of the institutional abuse and neglect that creates unequal opportunities for Latina/o students (Foxen, 2010; González et al., 2003). AP students were provided with challenging opportunities and college information that non-AP students were not privy to. Some AP students were mentored by their teachers, which helped guide them through the process of getting into college (Cavazos & Cavazos, 2010). Unfortunately, the same was not true for non-AP students. These differences demonstrate how inequitable access to valuable educational resources and social capital can lead to disparate future outcomes for many Latinas/os. In many cases Latina/o

students must seek assistance outside of their school setting in order to receive transition services and supports that help them access higher education.

College Preparation Programs

College preparation programs are important interventions for providing first-generation, underrepresented youth with academic enrichment, college counseling, mentoring, and financial aid information to ensure that they are equipped with the tools for success (Calaff, 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Perna & Kurban, 2013). Upward Bound, GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams), and Talent Search are just a few examples of programs that have been successful for helping underrepresented youth make successful transitions from high school to college (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Perna & Kurban, 2013). All of the previously mentioned college preparation programs, except Project GRAD, are federally-funded programs. These programs are typically conducted on college campuses in the summer and outside of regular school hours. College preparation programs function within Stanton-Salazar's six forms of institutional support by providing students with access to valuable social capital that they are otherwise deprived of at their schools (Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

These programs have also been instrumental for helping students build self-esteem to overcome the daily experience of low expectations, racial discrimination, and isolation that may be perpetuated by institutional agents and peers within their schools. College preparation programs have helped equalize student access by equipping underrepresented youth with the tools for success (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Perna & Kurban, 2013). Calaff (2008) explained that some college

preparation programs take a holistic approach by connecting the school, family, and community, which creates an extensive social network and a highly effective support system. Participation in college preparation programs have led to increased college enrollment and positive future outcomes for both Latina/o and African American students (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

A case study conducted in 1968 found that Luciano, a young Latino in Chicago, gained access to valuable social capital through an enrichment program outside of his school that helped him explore college options and financial aid, apply for admission, and get accepted.

> It certainly appears that if he did not receive such intervention along the way, while he may have finished high school, his chances for going to college would have been almost nil. His self-image would have been lowered because of the practice employed by his high school counselor in determining students' potentials on the basis of their achievement scores and refusing to assist students who did not live up to an arbitrary standard of performance. (Menacker & Pollack, 1971, p. 41)

The case study of Luciano provides a historical account of the benefit of college preparation programs for marginalized youth. There are thousands of "Lucianos" who need intervention to continue to higher education. Unfortunately, like other valuable resources, only about 5% of Latina/o youth actually gain access to college preparation programs (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). It is paramount that Latina/o youth be provided with equal educational opportunities in order to succeed educationally and economically. Furthermore, college preparation programs and other similar services have been found to

be the key for preventing first-generation, low-income, underrepresented youth from dropping out while increasing their chances of enrolling in college (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Contreras, 2011; Perna & Kurban, 2013).

The presence of cracks in the educational pipeline for Latinas should not be a mystery. The barriers that Latinas must overcome in order to gain access to higher education are most often exacerbated, rather than alleviated, by both counselors and teachers (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). The institutional practices of academic tracking, institutional abuse, and institutional neglect have continued to widen the access gap for Latinas. As conduits of vital social capital, schools have the power to "manufacture hope and despair" for Latinas at various levels of the educational pipeline (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). McWhirter, Valdez et al. (2013) and Perna and Kurban (2013) implicated the need for more research on the effectiveness of transition services and supports for helping Latinas and other underrepresented students reach higher education. Based upon past and current research, very few Latina/o high school students were receiving adequate transition services and supports from institutional agents, which meant that many of them are navigating their own way to college.

Role of Community Cultural Wealth

Latina youth all over the U.S. have strived to live the American Dream, but all of them are not provided with the equal opportunity to do so. The odds of accessing higher education are stacked against Latinas and there are cracks and potholes in the path. Yet there are Latinas who overcome these barriers and continue their education in an institution of higher education after high school. How do they do it? The community

cultural wealth of Latinas/os provides them with the resources needed to overcome these barriers.

The community cultural wealth (CCW) model is a theoretical framework that reveals the wealth in the Latina/o culture versus focusing on cultural deficits (Yosso, 2005). The CCW model is a holistic model in which cultural assets are utilized by Latinas to gain access to higher education and succeed thereafter. Latinas are marginalized based on their ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status, which makes accessing higher education very challenging (Maes, 2010).

Bourdieu defines cultural capital as the "accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities, possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society," (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Thus, whether people of color have cultural capital is determined by whether their culture is valued by the dominant society (Yosso, 2005). Bourdieu's theories on social capital and cultural capital take a deficit approach that leaves educational institutions faultless while ignoring the impact of institutional racism on students of color (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Valencia, 2010; Yosso, 2005). Deficit models have failed to explain how students of color are able to forego gender and racial barriers and achieve educational success. Valencia (2010) stressed the importance of "deconstructing deficit thinking" through research by revealing the cultural wealth of students of color that allowed them to overcome racial barriers. Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model is the social justice model that reveals the wealth in the Latina/o culture and defies cultural deficit thinking.

The cultural capital of Latinas/os encompasses all six forms of community cultural wealth. The six forms of community cultural wealth are aspirational capital,

social capital, familial capital, navigational capital, linguistic capital, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005). Research studies have confirmed that each form plays a major role in helping Latina/o students gain access to higher education (Cervantes, 2010; Foxen, 2010; Gándara, 1995; Huber, 2009; Liou, Antrop-González, Cooper, 2009; Luna & Martinez, 2012; Valdés, 1996; Welton & Martinez, 2014; Zentella, 2005).

Aspirational Capital

Aspirational capital is the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite the presence of barriers that threaten the fulfillment of those dreams (Yosso, 2005). Aspirational capital reveals the resiliency of Latinas/os that allows them to persistently keep the "American Dream" despite obstacles placed in their pathways and cracks in the educational pipeline (Gándara, 1995; Huber, 2009; Luna & Martinez, 2012; Yosso, 2005). This resiliency prevents Latinas from wavering from their hopes and desires when the latest "deficit" statistics are released or when the newest anti-immigrant policy is passed. Parents dream and encourage their children to do the same so that they might achieve the "dream of prosperity" (Gándara, 1995).

Aspirational capital is instrumental in every Latina/o success story. Latinas/os in Gándara's (1995) study who had achieved doctoral degrees recounted their migrant parents encouraging them to be high achievers. In González et al.'s (2003) study, Latina high school students who had been placed into low-level tracks, isolated, and humiliated within theirs schools still persisted to community colleges. Latina/o high school students who received no counseling assistance and experienced low expectations persevered to find their way into 4-year universities (Vela-Gude et al., 2009). Even in the face of

deportation, undocumented students still strived to gain access to higher education to fulfill their goals of attaining a degree (McWhirter, Ramos et al., 2014).

Young Latina/o students from various research studies maintained their dream to achieve great things despite experiencing racial discrimination and unequal educational opportunities (Foxen, 2010; Contreras, 2011; González et al., 2003; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; Vela-Gude et al., 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). One tenth grade Latina stated, "My mom didn't go to college and she's all struggling and I want a better life than that" (Gonzalez et al., 2012, p. 89). The most common reasons for the aspirations of Latina/o youth are to have a better life, to do better than their parents, and to not have to struggle in life (Foxen, 2010; Gonzalez et al., 2012). One mother spoke of the backbreaking work that she had done which contributed to her health problems and how she wanted her daughter to continue her education so that she would not have the same experience (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Though Latina/o parents often did not have the resources or knowledge to help their high school-aged children prepare for college they did not fail to encourage them to be successful and do well in life (Calaff, 2008; Liou, Antrop-González, & Cooper, 2009; Luna & Martinez, 2012; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

Familial Capital

Familial capital is the cultural knowledge "nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community, history, memory, and cultural intuition" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Familial capital can come in the form of *consejos*, family values, or encouragement shared within and between families. *Consejos* is advice, guidance, or parental wisdom that is often embedded in moral stories to teach children certain principles or behaviors

(Valdés, 1996). *Consejos* is part of *educacíon*, which is instruction on moral values, *respeto* (respect), and how to behave (Valdés, 1996).

Latina/o parents often use *consejos* to nurture their child's aspirations through stories about family struggles (Gándara, 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). These stories of prestigious family members and migration were meant to inspire children to achieve their dreams by communicating that family members and ancestors before them had made great sacrifices and had overcome adversity (Gándara, 1995). Latina/o university students expressed that the stories that their parents told them motivated them to attend college so that they could have more in life (Huber, 2009; Luna & Martinez, 2012).

Familial capital is fundamental to the success of Latina/o students who strive for higher education. Regardless of the geographical location of the high school, the majority of Latina/o students confirmed that their families encouraged them to go to college or to get a good education. In González et al.'s (2003) study the Latinas attending universities and community colleges received different amounts of transition services but parental encouragement and emotional support were common factors. Latina high school students in McWhirter, Valdez et al.'s (2013) study responded that their parents and siblings were the most encouraging for school and future goals.

The 2002 National Educational Longitudinal Study indicated that 90% of Latina students talked to their parents about college, and 76% went to other family members for college information (Cervantes, 2010). Through interviews, Cervantes (2010) found that Latinas "felt large support from their families to obtain an education" (p. 39). A national study of rural high school students revealed that 72% of Latina/o high school students went to their parents for post-high school planning information, and 54% found their

parents to be most helpful (Griffin et al., 2011). Parents and family members provide various forms of support to Latina/o students that ranges from encouragement and moral support to financial assistance for attending college (Cervantes, 2010; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013). The recurrent theme of family as the main source of support for Latina/o students was consistent with the cultural capital of *familism* (Cervantes, 2010; Valdés, 1996).

Latina/o students also expressed that their parents stressed the importance of self-reliance, hard work, sacrifice, and maintaining high standards (Gándara, 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). One Latina recounted her father saying, "Always study, always study…Always study, just in case your husband leaves you, and you will always have something to fall back on…" (González et al., 2003, p. 154). A Latina college student from Welton and Martinez's (2014) study shared the *consejos* her mother gave her, "You should do a lot, you do a lot more when you have a degree, not just a high school degree, but when you have a college degree or any type of degree" (p. 214).

The Latina mother teaches the *educacíon* that equips Latina/o children with values and skills to accomplish any goal (Valdés, 1996). The values of hard work and responsibility are indoctrinated in Latina/o children at a very early age in which they are taught to work, cook, and clean at home (Gándara, 1995; Valdés, 1996). In Gándara's (1995) study, the Latinas/os who had achieved doctoral degrees attributed the personal characteristic of perseverance and hard work as major factors in their accomplishments. Most agreed that they were not necessarily the most intelligent in their classes, but they were the hardest workers. These were values that their immigrant parents had demonstrated and instilled in them, which led to their success. Regardless of the age of

Latina/o students who aspired to access higher education or to succeed, they attributed hard work and persistence as key factors in achieving educational success. The value of hard work resulted in hard work in their school work as well.

The Latina mother was the most prominent source of familial support mentioned repeatedly by Latina/o participants in various studies (Gándara, 1995; Liou et al., 2009; Luna & Martinez, 2013; Welton & Martinez, 2014). Participants stated that their mothers were sources of inspiration, role models, mentors, and friends to them (Liou et al., 2009). This recurrent theme of "mother" confirmed that mothers have a major impact on the educational outcomes of their children.

Social Capital

Social capital as cultural wealth is defined as peer, social networks, and community resources that "provide instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). The peer groups formed by many Latinas/os through courses with middle-class White students in the college-prep track provided them with access to valuable information that would affect their future outcomes. One Latina expressed that a former White classmate prevented her from falling into a general education track by calling her over to the college-prep registration line and convincing her to sign up (Gándara, 1995). Another Latina in Gándara's (1995) study who was tracked into general education was a member of the band and through her interactions with her fellow White band members she found out what courses she needed to take to prepare for college. These two Latinas later achieved advanced degrees.

The majority of the Latinas in community colleges who experienced high levels of institutional neglect and abuse mostly depended on each other for support. In González

et al.'s (2003) study, many of the Latinas in community colleges reported that they helped each other. They assisted each other with information, filling out applications, and meeting deadlines.

Latina/o students from high schools in Milwaukee and Los Angeles were able to gain access to college information through social networks formed through their church, peers, teammates, and other extracurricular activities (Liou, Antrop-González, & Cooper, 2009). The college-educated parents of one Latino student's soccer teammate provided access to a computer, college information, and advice that helped him select universities to which he should apply (Liou et al., 2009). Some Latinas/os in the study had gained access to a community-based organization called Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) that assisted them with the process of applying to college (Liou et al., 2009). In Luna and Martinez's (2012) study, the social networks that Latina/o students formed through contact with peers from magnet schools and participation in Latina/o clubs and organizations helped them acquire information that led to their college enrollment.

Navigational Capital

"Navigational capital refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions" not created with Latinas/os in mind (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Latina/o students' ability to navigate various social institutions were gained from their social networks (Liou et al., 2009; Luna & Martinez, 2012). The guidance provided by social contacts into territories unchartered by Latina/o students facilitated the acquisition of this skill. They were able to gain insight on the social norms and interactions within such organizations. The

navigational skills gained through their social networks would be valuable for college and beyond.

Linguistic Capital

Latina/o students who communicate in both English and Spanish are able to maintain a dual reference (Gándara, 1995). This dual reference is the ability to communicate effectively between and within two different cultural groups and is evidence of linguistic capital. The Latinas were able to maintain their Latina/o relationships as well as maintain relationships with White middle-class students. This form of capital allows one to maneuver through various institutions. In Liou et al.'s (2009) study, a Latina student expressed the joy of being able to communicate with individuals at her church who spoke Spanish and other languages. This capital was essential for her formation of diverse social networks that allowed her to gain college information. *La iglesia* (the church) also plays an important role in reinforcing the Spanish-speaking skills of native-born Latina/o children (Zentella, 2005).

Linguistic capital allows Latina/o students to be able to translate for their parents or other family members (Cervantes, 2010; Yosso, 2005). This form of "language brokering" led to increased self-confidence for one Latina (Huber, 2009). Language is almost a sense of identity for Latina/o youth (Valdés, 1996). Bilingualism is an asset for Latina/o students that allow them to expand and maintain their social networks (Liou et al., 2009; Zentella, 2005). According to Zentella (2005) Latina/o students with the ability to read and write in Spanish perform equally well or better academically than monolingual English-speaking students. This advantage was found to be especially beneficial for Latinas/os communicating within their church which could consist of

various different cultural groups (Liou et al., 2009). This also facilitates their access to knowledgeable individuals in their church. Language allows students of color to form a bridge to various worlds, which otherwise would not be possible.

Resistant Capital

Resistant capital is exhibited by a form of resilience coupled with perseverance that allows Latinas/os to oppose inequity and racism by achieving academic success (Yosso, 2005). Unequal educational opportunities due to racial discrimination have caused many Latina/o students to internalize stereotypes, become withdrawn, and eventually drop out, which is a self-fulfilling prophecy (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). On the contrary, instead of internalizing oppression and quitting, there are Latina/o students who capitalize on it. The main theme symbolizing resistant capital found in research studies was "proving people wrong" (Gándara et al., 2013; Liou et al., 2009; Welton & Martinez, 2014). The reference to "people" means the White, dominant society. Once Latina/o students become cognizant of the structures of racism they can position themselves to overcome rather than succumb to oppression.

A Latina undergraduate student in Gándara et al.'s (2013) study recounted advice from her Latina high school counselor:

> She was a person who really influenced me to want something more with my life because she would tell me that because I was a Latina that I would be stereotyped…you don't want to prove people right, you want to prove them wrong! You want to be able to say 'I'm Latina and I'm going to college and I'm furthering my education!' (p. 50)

This Latina counselor instilled resistant capital in this Latina student while also encompassing aspirational capital, which is characteristic of how each form of community culture wealth overlaps (Yosso, 2005). Latina/o students in Welton and Martinez's (2014) and Liou et al.'s (2009) study were proud of their ethnic identity and demonstrated high academic achievement in order to disprove negative stereotypes within their school. Resistant capital is very important for equipping Latina/o students to break the barriers of institutional racism in order to gain access to higher education. Experiences of marginalization and isolation have caused many Latina/o students to exhibit self-defeating behavior that led to poor school performance or dropping out (Contreras, 2011; Foxen, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999). As high school students, the highly degreed Latinas/os in Gándara's (1995) study adopted a competitive attitude towards academics in order to prove that Mexicans were smart and that they could perform better than Whites in their advanced courses.

Overall, community cultural wealth plays an essential role in helping Latina/o students gain access to higher education. Left to their own cultural faculties Latina/o high school students are attending college despite the barriers of institutional racism. Latina/o students who demonstrate resistant capital exhibited a strong sense of racial identity and pride in the Spanish language (Gándara, 1995). The aspirational capital that drives them is nurtured by familial capital, which facilitates the formation of resistant capital. Latina/o students' linguistic capital allows them to develop social networks across cultures, which informs their ability to navigate through institutions not intended for Latinas/os. Collectively, community cultural wealth as cultural capital has paved

potholes and filled the breaks in the educational pipeline for many Latina/o students making their passage into higher education.

Georgia as a Newly Emerging Latina/o State

Georgia's demographic history had consisted primarily of Whites and African Americans after the expulsion of Cherokee Indians that led to the Trail of Tears in the 1830s. This racial binary existed in the state for over a century until the influx of Latinas/os into the state that began in the 1990s (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002; Bohon, Macpherson, & Atiles, 2005). Latinas/os from Mexico had been recruited by farmers in Georgia as early as the 1970s to work as field laborers because there was a shortage of U.S. workers. After the Civil Rights movement, the rise in manufacturing, and the availability of public assistance, field work became unpopular with African Americans and Whites (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002). At that time the work was seasonal and the workers and their families would migrate in and out of the state based upon the availability of work with no permanent domicile in the state, which caused little change in the population. Over time, Georgia farmers became more reliant on the low-wage labor provided by Latina/o migrant workers and needed them year-round. This situation led to the establishment of work camps and housing for migrants throughout Georgia (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002; Verdugo, 2006). The presence of Latinas/os in Georgia was positively correlated with the dependency of southern farmers on their labor, which led to a steady Latina/o population increase.

Population Explosion

In the 1990s, the Latina/o population in Georgia began to increase rapidly due to the employment opportunities available in the carpet mills of Dalton, in the poultry plants

of Gainesville, and for the construction work needed to prepare for the 1996 Olympics and to build homes for the increasing housing industry in Atlanta (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002; Erisman & Looney, 2007; Morando, 2013; Verdugo, 2006). Employment opportunities in Georgia and other Southern states attracted many Latinas/os from Southwestern states and Mexico for the promise of work and better living conditions. This migration redistributed the Latina/o population across the U.S. and into new locations of the southeastern United States and was called the new Latino Diaspora or new destination (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002; Gibson, 2002; Hamann & Harklau, 2010).

The major influx of Latinas/os into Georgia was evidenced by the Latina/o population tripling in a single decade. Between 1990 and 2000 the Latina/o population in Georgia increased from 108,922 to 435,227, which represented a 300% increase (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2002; UGA SBDC, 2003). Georgia's population had increased by 26% to reach 8.19 million people with Latina/o growth accounting for 19% of the total increase. Latinas/os had a strong visual presence in the state and rapid growth in the population continued.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, it was estimated that the Latina/o population in Georgia had increased by 96% between 2000 and 2010, which caused the group's population to reach 853,689 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002, 2011). By 2011, Georgia's Latina/o population had reached 880,000, which represented 9% of the state's 9.8 million population (Pew Research Center, 2013b). A combination of high fertility rates and immigration resulted in a young, large, Latina/o population. After 21 years of rapid

growth, Georgia had the tenth largest population of Latinas/os in the U.S. (Pew Hispanic Center, 2013b).

Racial Climate

Georgia had a long history of racism, discrimination, and maltreatment of African Americans. The remnants of slavery and the ideology of White superiority were not erased by the Emancipation Proclamation or the Civil Rights Movement. These factors still remained in Georgia and functioned to oppress people of color in the state. Racism was a systemic problem in Georgia that functioned in many institutions to disenfranchise African Americans, but the rise in the Latina/o population was seen as a problem by the dominant society (Murillo, 2002). Latinas/os had historically experienced racial discrimination at the hands of Whites in the Southwest and they would find themselves unwelcome in Georgia as well (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002). Latinas/os and African Americans are different racial/ethnic groups with different historical locations, but they share the commonality of oppression as people of color.

In 1980, President Ronald Reagan revived Theodore Roosevelt's English-Only ideology by stressing that it was "un-American" to speak any language other than English (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002; García & Torres-Guevara, 2010). This declaration was made in opposition to bilingual education programs being implemented in schools throughout the country. In 1986, Georgia established English-only laws as a result of the increased presence of first generation, Spanish-speaking, Latina/o immigrants in the state (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002). In the metro Atlanta area city ordinances were adopted that required business signage to be at least 75% English to avoid fines (Beck &

Allexsaht-Snider, 2002). Mexican-owned businesses were the targets of this ordinance, while the signs of French and Italian restaurants were ignored by officials.

The drastic growth in Georgia's Latina/o population from 1990 to 2011 resulted in social unrest in the state (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002; Brown & Odem, 2012; Hamann, Wortham, & Murillo, 2002). During the same period, the larger U.S. experienced the same rapid growth in the Latina/o population with most of the growth occurring in non-traditional states in the east (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). The xenophobic nature of the dominant White society was rising up due to a new, highly visible minority group that had exceeded the African American population in the U.S. (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002; Browne & Odem, 2012). In Georgia this was a problem because race was considered to be African American and there was no room for another group of individuals of color (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002)

Georgia was one of the first Southern states to copycat Arizona's immigration legislation in the passing of House Bill 87 (HB 87) in 2011 (Browne & Odem, 2012; Luque et al., 2013). This bill legalized the racial profiling of Latinas/os in the state. Though parts of the bill were struck down by the Supreme Court due to being unconstitutional, the damage had already been done. Several Latinas/os fled the state for fear of deportation (Levine & LeBaron, 2011) and as a result crops in the fields of Georgia began to rot because there was no one there to harvest them. This anti-immigration legislation cost the state's farming industry 140 million dollars before the end of 2011 (McKissick & Kane, 2011), and caused a great outcry by the farm industry to repeal the legislation in order to regain the labor of migrant workers (Feinstein, 2013; Luque et al., 2013).

Latina/o Education

Research that focuses on Latina/o students' transition from secondary schooling to postsecondary schooling is limited in the state of Georgia. Based upon the data available on Georgia's Latina/o population, they have not fared much better than Latinas/os residing in traditional states like California and Arizona (Erisman & Looney, 2007). Though high school graduation rates for Georgia's Latina/o youth have increased from the lows of the 1990s, they still lag well behind their Black and White counterparts. In 2015, the Georgia high school graduation rate was 72% for Latinas/os, 75.2% for Blacks, and 82.8% for Whites (GADOE, 2015). These statistics indicated that Latinas/os had the lowest graduation rate in the state and disparities in achievement remained for students of color in Georgia. Latinas/os have the lowest educational attainment of any other racial/ethnic group in the state (Pew Hispanic Center, 2013b).

Latina/o students who have graduated from Georgia high schools still have several barriers to cross in order to gain access to higher education in Georgia. The barriers were greater if these new graduates were undocumented. In 2006, Georgia began directly restricting access to higher education for Latinas/os when the state legislature passed SB 492, a bill that banned in-state tuition for undocumented students and required the verification of citizenship for all students (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014; Erisman & Looney, 2007). This legislation created a financial barrier to accessing higher education that would cost undocumented students up to four times or more than the price of in-state tuition.

Based upon a 2010 report by the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, prohibiting Latina/o access to higher education reached a new level when Jessica Colotl, a student at

Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia, was almost expelled after her undocumented status was revealed (Cook & Simmons, 2010; Shahshahani & Washington, 2013). Like many undocumented students, she initially came to the U.S. with her parents as a young child. Colotl began attending Kennesaw State in 2006, which was prior to the enactment of Georgia's SB 492 (Cook & Simmons, 2010). She had paid for her own education without any assistance from federal or state financial aid for all 3 years of her education. Regardless of this knowledge, Colotl was detained and state officials called for her expulsion and deportation. After intervention by a criminal defense lawyer, an immigration lawyer, and several human rights advocacy groups, Colotl was released and allowed to continue her education at Kennesaw, but at the price of out-of-state tuition (Cook & Simmons, 2010; Shahshahani & Washington, 2013).

Shortly after this event, the University System of Georgia created a policy that specifically targeted Latinas/os and would limit the educational attainment of this group in the state (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). The new policies of the University System of Georgia required that all students have a lawful presence in the U.S. The policies required that all undocumented students pay out-of-state tuition and prohibited them from attending Georgia Regents University (formerly the Medical College of Georgia), the Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia State University, the University of Georgia, and Georgia College and State University (Board of Regents USG, 2010). These five universities were considered the most elite and selective in the University System of Georgia. This policy was established despite the Board of Regents having access to a report that indicated that undocumented students made up less than 1% of the university system's total enrollment of 310,000 students (Board of Regents USG,

2010). Less 1% of the total enrollees represented 501 undocumented students, but yet the Board of Regents desired to place a limitation on their access to higher education.

Plyler v. Doe (1982) paved the way for all Latina/os to receive a K-12 education regardless of citizenship but this ruling did not specifically address higher education (Contreras, 2011). Likewise, the absence of affirmative action policies had limited the presence of Latinas/os, African Americans, and Native-Americans in Georgia's most elite and highly selective universities (Flores, 2010). The anti-immigration sentiment engrained in the state laws and higher education policies and practices of Georgia (Board of Regents USG, 2010; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014; Shahshahani & Washington, 2013) created an unwelcome atmosphere for Latinas/os and perpetuated further disparities in their educational attainment (Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002; Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

USG Latina/o Enrollment

Student enrollment data from the University System of Georgia (USG) indicated that Latina/o students make up a very small percentage of the college-going population. The average Latina/o student enrollment ranged from 7.3% to 7.4% for the Fall Semester of 2015 and Spring Semester of 2016 (Board of Regents USG, 2015; 2016). During the same periods, the average enrollment of White (51.5%) and African American (27.6%) students greatly exceeded that of Latina/o students (Board of Regents USG, 2015; 2016). These percentages did not account for individuals in private colleges/universities within the state.

Though Latina/o participation in higher education had increased since 1990, their representation in higher education was not equally representative of their enrollment at

the K-12 level. The fall enrollment rates since 1990, indicated a pattern of underrepresentation of Latinas/os when compared to other racial/ethnic groups (see Table 2).

Table 2

Georgia K-12 and University System of Georgia Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity for 1990-2015

Race	1990		2000		2010		2015	
	K-12	College	K-12	College	K-12	College	K-12	College
Latina/o	1.0%	1.2%	4.7%	2.0%	11.9%	4.7%	14.6%	7.3%
African American	35.0%	15.9%	38.0%	22.0%	37.0%	27.0%	36.9%	27.6%
Whites	63.0%	79.7%	53.6%	68.6%	44.4%	55.2%	41.0%	51.6%

Note. Adapted from the Georgia Department of Education. *State Report Cards* (1990-2015) and Board of Regents University System of Georgia, *Fall Enrollment Headcounts (1990-2015)*.

According to these reports, African Americans and Latinas/os have continued to have disproportionate representation in higher education when compared to their White counterparts. The gap between Latina/o K-12 and college enrollment was evident by 2000 and increased by 2015. The 2015 data indicated that Latina/o enrollment in Georgia's university system was only half of Latina/o student enrollment in the K-12 public school system (see Table 2). These Georgia educational statistics have followed the trend of underrepresentation of people of color in higher education that have persisted in the U.S. despite over 30 years of educational reform.

Latino Critical Race Theory

Public schools have historically been perceived as a microcosm of society, the "great equalizer," and the perfect environment for implementing new social policies, but they have failed in the role as a great equalizer (Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Contreras, 2010). Instead of promoting equity, U.S. schools have reproduced inequality through the further stratification of minority groups into their perspective social and economic classes, and into the labor force (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Inequality makes it difficult for minority students to break the cycle of low educational attainment without intervention from an outside source (Portes, 2005).

Latino critical race theory (LatCrit) is a subcategory of critical race theory (CRT), which challenges the institution of racism against Latinas/os. CRT was birthed from a legal movement that began in the 1970s in response to covert forms of racism arising to undermine the gains made during the Civil Rights era (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Derrick Bell, a New York University law professor, was a key figure in the formation of Critical Race Theory. Since its beginning, CRT has expanded to education and other disciplines. CRT also branched off into subcategories that bring attention to other marginalized racial groups, genders, and sexual orientations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Daniel Solórzano (1997) identified five themes of CRT that should guide educational practice, policy, and research. The five principles as they apply to LatCrit are as follows:

1. *The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism.* Racism is central to CRT. Racism is a normal occurrence in society and is common to the daily lives of

Latinas/os. The effect of racism is compounded when race and other factors such as gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, or immigration status intersect (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Yosso, 2005).

2. *The challenge to dominant ideology.* LatCrit challenges White privilege and refutes the claims that educational institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity" (Yosso, 2005, p. 73). LatCrit refutes "papers please" laws, racial stereotypes, English-only laws (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), wage inequality, poverty, and the new "Juan Crow" (Browne & Odem, 2012).
3. *The commitment to social justice.* LatCrit is committed to social justice by revealing racism in its most covert forms, eliminating it, and empowering people of color, as well as those oppressed by other forms of subordination (i.e., class, gender, and sexual orientation).
4. *The centrality of experiential knowledge.* LatCrit recognizes that the "lived experience" of Latina/o individuals is "legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing and teaching" (Yosso, 2005). Allowing the voices of Latina/o individuals to be heard (i.e., narratives, biographies, storytelling, etc.) is important for challenging racism.
5. *The transdisciplinary perspective.* LatCrit transcends the boundaries of disciplines in order to draw on scholarship from other areas that will assist in analyzing race and racism (Yosso, 2005).

The use of LatCrit as the theoretical lens for this mixed methods study will be important for addressing the underlying structures of power that have created barriers to

Latinas gaining access to higher education. The barriers of academic tracking, racial discrimination, low teacher expectations, and anti-immigration laws are all rooted in racism. Hindering Latina/o students' access to higher education confines them to low-skilled, low-wage labor, which is a benefit to the dominant society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Cultural deficit thinking diverts attention from racial inequality as a part of schooling to blaming Latina/o students and their parents for achievement gaps (Valencia, 2010). LatCrit allows for the revelation of forms of racism so that they can be remedied.

Summary

This literature review has allowed for the identification of barriers which were racial discrimination, lack of financial aid, a lack of information, and anti-immigration policies. The sources of school-based social capital were identified as teachers and counselors. The review also allowed for the identification of cultural capital in the form of aspirational, social, familial, navigational, and linguistic capital. In addition, the review provided information about the past and current state of Georgia in terms of race, education, and immigration. It is important to note that there is a lack of research on Latina access to higher education in the state of Georgia.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design (QUAN→QUAL) was used in this research study in order to describe the best practices for providing transition services and supports to Latina high school students in Georgia. The study was conducted in two distinct phases. In the first phase, online surveys were completed by Latina undergraduate students from Georgia institutions of higher education. The descriptive analysis of the quantitative data collected during Phase I informed the development of the focus group questions used in Phase II. During Phase II, two focus groups were conducted; one focus group of Latina undergraduates at two Georgia institutions of higher education.

A mixed methods approach incorporating the use of online surveys and two focus groups was used to answer the following research questions:

1. What are Latina students' experiences in transitioning from high school to higher education?
2. What forms of social and cultural capital did Latina students use to help them transition from high school to higher education?
3. What are the perceived best practices for transitioning Latina high schools students into institutions of higher education?

Benefits of Mixed Methods Design

A mixed methods design was used in this study to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data in order to identify the forms of social and cultural capital Latinas in Georgia used to transition from high school to higher education. This design also allowed the researcher to gain insight into the transition experiences of Latinas in Georgia. Employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods in this study allowed the researcher to explore the various aspects of the transition experience from the perspective of Latinas. Mixed methodology allowed the researcher to gain feedback from a larger portion of the Latina undergraduate population in Georgia through the use of quantitative methods while also giving Latinas voice through the use of qualitative methods, which is in the spirit of the Latino critical race theory. The use of both online surveys and focus group interviews allowed the study to serve both diagnostic and prescriptive purposes. Ultimately, the research design helped inform best practices and policy by revealing the perceived effectiveness of transition services and supports offered by Georgia high schools from the perspective of Latina undergraduates who have experienced these services.

Mixed methods research is the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods when collecting and analyzing data in a research study to explain a phenomenon. The use of a mixed methods design for this study served two purposes by allowing the researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative data in order to determine what is happening, why it is happening, and allowed for generalization of the findings (Creswell, 2009). Researchers are not limited to one method of data collection or analysis when using a mixed method design for the purpose of research. In this aspect,

the quantitative and qualitative data work better together in order to describe and explore a phenomenon within the same study. This research design allowed the researcher to conduct the investigation in a manner necessary for gathering meaningful data and discovering what is going on and why it is going on.

Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design

The sequential explanatory mixed methods design is considered one of the most direct mixed methods designs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This design served to be explanatory by providing quantitative results in the first phase that were explained and further explored by the second qualitative phase. An online survey was conducted in the first phase to collect quantitative data, which was subsequently analyzed for descriptive statistics. The qualitative responses in the survey were analyzed for common themes. The quantitative phase was used to find out which forms of social and cultural capital Latinas used to access higher education, which allowed for greater understanding into their transition experiences. The findings of the data collected during the quantitative phase were used to guide the development of the questions used in the focus group interviews of the second phase. The procedural model for this sequential mixed methods study can be found in Figure 1.

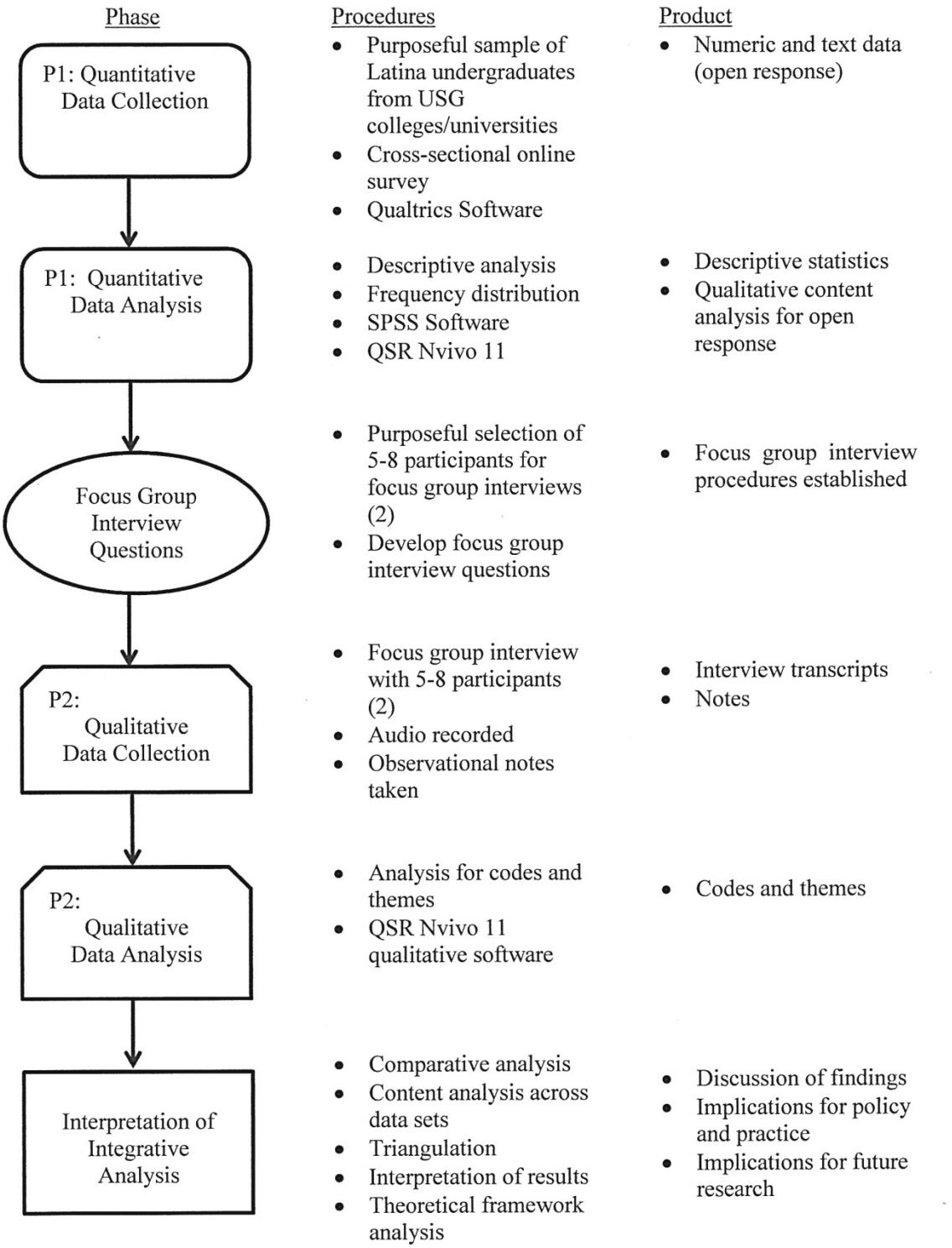

Figure 1. Procedural model for sequential explanatory mixed methods design. Adapted from *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research, 2nd Ed.* (p. 305), by J.W. Creswell and V.L. Plano Clark, 2011, Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

In the qualitative phase of this sequential explanatory design the researcher conducted two focus group interviews to confirm, explain, and explore the findings from the quantitative phase. The follow-up phase to the quantitative phase allowed the researcher to gain a first-hand account of the transition experiences of individuals who are rich with experience – Latinas undergraduates themselves. A volunteer sample of Latina undergraduates at two different institutions of higher education in Georgia was solicited to participate in the focus groups to be held at their institutions. The focus group interviews were conducted in this study to explain and confirm the descriptive results generated from the online survey while also providing insight into the themes generated from the open-ended responses. The researcher also used the focus group interviews to explore the transition experiences of Latina undergraduates in Georgia in more depth. Qualitative data in the form of transcripts derived from the focus group interviews were coded and analyzed for themes.

The priority in this sequential explanatory mixed methods study was equally given to both the quantitative and qualitative phases due to their collective ability to describe and explain the phenomenon. The limited research on the transition experience of Latinas in Georgia and the use of the LatCrit and the CCW model demands that the voices of Latinas be heard. The focus group interviews provided an in depth exploration of the transition experience of Latinas and their use of social and cultural capital that could not be discovered with the descriptive results from the online survey alone. The qualitative phase of this study provided the researcher with deeper insight into the phenomenon under study that the quantitative phase could not.

Strengths and Challenges of Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design

The sequential explanatory mixed methods design has both strengths and limitations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The design's straightforward, sequential implementation is one of its major strengths. Collecting quantitative data and qualitative data in two different phases at two different times makes it feasible for one researcher to conduct the entire study. Another strength is that the sequence and timing of the data collection allows the researcher to analyze the data within the phase in which it was collected. The follow up nature of the sequential design serves as way to clarify or solidify the quantitative findings by allowing further exploration of the phenomenon using qualitative methods, which makes the design emergent (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The greatest single challenge to using a sequential explanatory mixed methods design is that its implementation requires a great deal of time. Collecting quantitative and qualitative data in two separate phases is quite time consuming. The sequential nature of the design makes time a major factor because data from the quantitative phase must be collected and analyzed before the researcher can conduct the qualitative phase. The time required to analyze qualitative data and to conduct an integrative analysis of quantitative and qualitative findings can be quite extensive as well.

Target Population

The target population for this study was Latina undergraduate students who were currently enrolled in institutions of higher education in the state of Georgia. The institutions of higher education were required to be 2-year community/junior colleges or 4-year universities within the University System of Georgia that had a Latina/o student

enrollment of at least 4% in the fall semester of 2014. The participants in the study were selected based upon three criteria. The participants had to be: 1) Latina, 2) a graduate from a Georgia high school, and 3) currently enrolled as an undergraduate student in an institution of higher education (2-year or 4-year) in the state of Georgia. This population participated in the Phase I online surveys and the Phase II focus group interviews.

A total of 18 institutions within the University System of Georgia were contacted to gain their participation in the study due to meeting the 4% enrollment criterion. Refer to Table 3 for the list of institutions that meet the enrollment criterion. Two of these universities were solicited as the site for one of two focus groups to be conducted during the Phase II. This selection was based upon the Latina/o population at the perspective institution, the size of the Latina/o population in the location of the college/university, and its regional location. The two focus groups were conducted at two colleges/universities in south Georgia.

Table 3

Colleges/Universities in the University System of Georgia Invited to Participate in the Study

College/University	Latina/o Enrollment %
1. Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (Tifton)	6.4
2. Armstrong Atlantic State University (Savannah)	6.8
3. College of Coastal Georgia (Brunswick)	5.4
4. Columbus State University (Columbus)	5.4
5. Dalton State College (Dalton)	21.3
6. Georgia College and State University (Milledgeville)	5.0
7. Georgia Gwinnett College (Atlanta)	15.6
8. Georgia Highlands College (Dallas)	9.3
9. Georgia Institute of Technology (Atlanta)	6.6
10. Georgia Perimeter College (Decatur)	10.0
11. Georgia Southern University (Statesboro)	6.3
12. Georgia State University (Atlanta)	8.3
13. Kennesaw State University (Kennesaw)	7.6
14. South Georgia College (Douglas)	4.7
15. University of Georgia (Athens)	4.8
16. University of North Georgia (Dahlonega)	9.4
17. University of West Georgia (Carrollton)	4.1
18. Valdosta State University (Valdosta)	4.5

Note. Colleges/universities in University System of Georgia with 4% or higher Latina/o enrollment for Fall Semester 2014. This table was adapted from *the Board of Regents University System of Georgia Semester Enrollment Report Fall 2014*, http://www.usg.edu/assets/research/documents/enrollment_reports/SER_Fall2014.pdf

Gatekeepers

Access to the target population was gained by contacting gatekeepers, such as advisors of Latina/o organizations, multicultural affairs, or minority affairs (Creswell, 2009). In order to gain access to potential participants for the study the researcher contacted the gatekeepers of the target population. Gatekeepers are individuals who have the authority to provide the researcher with access to the target population. The assistance of a gatekeeper does not guarantee participation by the target population, though it does increase its likelihood. The researcher contacted multicultural affairs, minority affairs, and the advisors of Latina/o organizations at selected 2-year and 4-year colleges throughout Georgia.

The researcher contacted the gatekeepers at each institution one semester prior to the semester designated for data collection. Gatekeepers were contacted via e-mail and provided with a letter addressing the purpose and details of the study in terms of the level of involvement required by study participants. The researcher's documentation of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval at the sponsoring campus was also provided. The researcher requested permission to access the student e-mail listerv at each institution so that Latina undergraduate students could be invited to participate and online surveys could be sent. Institutions that did not allow the researcher access to the student e-mail listserv handled the distribution of the survey e-mail. A confirmation of e-mail delivery was sent to the researcher by the institutions handling distribution to insure that the e-mails were being sent out as specified.

Instrumentation

The instrument of choice for data collection in Phase I was a cross-sectional online survey. This method of data collection produced findings that were generalizable to the larger Latina population in Georgia, which allowed inferences to be made about the condition of transition services and supports provided to Latinas at Georgia high schools (Creswell, 2009). Conducting an online survey was also the most economical and efficient way to survey hundreds of Latina undergraduates at various institutions of higher education throughout Georgia in a short period of time. This method of surveying also made it easier to monitor the response rate frequently and efficiently throughout the survey period (Dillman, 2007; Sue & Ritter, 2011). Another advantage to using this instrument is that many online survey programs would calculate the statistics, thus decreasing data collection and analysis turn-around time. In this study Qualtrics web-based survey software was used to create and deliver the online survey. This software had capabilities that allowed the researcher to monitor responses, send reminders, and analyze the survey data.

Due to the unique variables involved in this study and the limited quantitative research available concerning the Latina transition experience, an existing survey that would address the research questions could not be found. The researcher developed the Latina/o Social and Cultural Capital Questionnaire (LSCQ) to measure the independent variables, social and cultural capital, and to address the collective Latina transition experience from high school to higher education. The Latina/o Social and Culture Capital Questionnaire (LSCQ) is a 85-item cross-sectional online survey that utilizes both close-ended and open-ended items (Appendix C).

The independent variables in this mixed methods study were social and cultural capital. Social capital is the resources captured through direct and indirect ties embedded in social networks and connections that can be used for one's benefit (Lin, 2001). Social capital was measured by identifying social interactions between Latina students and institutional agents, classmates, mentors, college preparation programs, and/or college recruiters that led to the acquisition of college information or assistance. Instances of bridging, advocacy, emotional/moral support, and sound advice being provided to Latina students by previously specified sources of capital will also be measured as social capital by LSCQ (see Table 4).

In this study cultural capital was encompassed by community cultural wealth. "Community cultural wealth is an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed" and used by people of color to overcome and counter oppression (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). LSCQ measured cultural capital by identifying behaviors, values, and skills aligned with six forms of community cultural wealth (see Table 4). These six forms of community cultural wealth are aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital.

Table 4

Measurement of Concepts by the Latina/o Social and Cultural Capital Questionnaire (LSCQ)

Variables	Concepts	Survey Items
Social capital	Sources of college information & assistance	Q22-Q27, Q32, Q34-Q39, Q43,Q45-Q49
	Participation in extracurricular activities	Q41-Q42, Q44, Q45
	Sources of encouragement for attending college	Q17, Q28-Q29, Q52
Cultural capital	Aspirations	Q14-Q17, Q65
	Family encouragement	Q53-Q54, Q71
	Family values	Q66-Q68, Q72-Q73
	Family stories	Q63-Q65
	Friend encouragement	Q55-Q57
	Religious activities & encouragement for college	Q74-Q78
Transition experience	Access to college information	Q31, Q35, Q40-Q42, Q44-Q49
	Assistance with applications & financial aid	Q26, Q30, Q59
	Services That Would Help	Q61
	Most Helpful Services/Supports	Q30, Q58-Q59, Q62
	Obstacles to higher education	Q60
	Racialization	Q79-Q85

Aspirational capital was measured by student aspirations and resilience in the presence of barriers. Linguistic capital was measured by the Latina students' use of both English and Spanish in ways that allowed them to be cultural brokers and navigate between two worlds. Familial capital was measured by family values, interactions, beliefs, and traditional practices. As a form of cultural wealth, social capital was measured by interactions with friends, church members, and others outside of the school setting that led to college-related information or assistance. Navigational capital was measured by the ability to navigate through institutions that were not created with Latinas/os in mind (Yosso, 2005). Resistant capital was measured by students using racial oppression as motivation for accessing higher education and students being taught to resist racial stereotypes by parents.

The LSCQ also functioned within the LatCrit to identify Latina students' experience of racism. Racism was measured by experiences of discrimination, isolation, stereotyping, neglect, ridicule, and tracking as a result of ethnicity. The Latina transition experience was measured by inquiries about access to social capital, interactions with institutional agents, and the admission process. Collectively, LSCQ addressed the theoretical frameworks of the community cultural wealth model and the LatCrit, which provided insight on the overall Latina transition experience from high school to higher education.

The researcher developed the survey questions based upon the review of current literature addressing the Latina transition experience, transition supports and services, and forms of social and cultural capital used to access higher education. The researcher also modified questions adapted from existing surveys to address the topics under study.

The demographic questions placed at the beginning of the survey were derived from existing survey items that are commonly found on national surveys. The survey consisted of both closed and open-ended questions, though the majority of the items were closed-ended. The open-ended questions were used to gain a deeper understanding of Latina undergraduates' transition experience that could not be captured by closed-ended items alone (see Appendix C).

The use of Qualtrics allowed the researcher to use contingency questions that would eliminate the need for participants to answer questions that did not apply to them. The first group of questions in the survey was used to prevent individuals who did not meet the sampling criterion from participating in the survey. A progress bar was included in the online format so that participants would be aware of their percentage of completion, which would help prevent them from aborting the survey. Study participants were able to return to the survey link necessary so that they may complete it at another time prior to the end survey date. The goal was to minimize the survey to a time length of no more than 15-20 minutes to prevent participants from dropping out of the study (Sue & Ritter, 2011). The researcher pilot tested the survey to assure the content and construct validity, readability, and the length of time required for respondents to complete the survey.

Pilot Test

The pilot test of the survey involved two phases of review to determine the revisions that needed to be made before the survey could be launched. The questions developed for the survey were first reviewed by a panel of experts who were knowledgeable in the content area and in survey research (Colton & Covert, 2007;

Dillman, 2007; Sue & Ritter, 2011). These individuals reviewed the survey questions to insure that they were suitable for answering the research questions under study, which would determine the content validity. This review panel also addressed the appropriateness of question formatting, wording, and response options. The cultural context of this research study in reference to Latinas/os and their history of marginalization also required that the panel identify any cultural issues involved with the questions. The researcher made the first revisions to the questionnaire based upon the feedback provided by the panel experts.

In the second phase of the review the revised online survey was pilot tested with a small sample of the target population to determine the face validity of the questions and to reveal issues in responding to the survey (Creswell, 2009; Dillman, 2007; Sue & Ritter, 2011). The online survey was administered to four Latina undergraduate students representative of the target population (Sue & Ritter, 2011). These participants were from Georgia Military College (GMC), a college in Georgia that would not be participating in the full research study. The same procedures for contacting gatekeepers and contacting potential participants in the research study were followed for the pilot study. An incentive for participation was provided to the pilot study participants in accordance with IRB guidelines.

In conducting the pilot study the researcher recruited GMC students from various locations via e-mail. The researcher gained permission through the appropriate GMC entity to conduct the pilot study, but was not given access to the student listserv. GMC sent the invitation e-mail out to the target population with the researcher's contact information. Interested participants contacted the researcher via e-mail to insure that they

met the criteria of the study and if so, a date and time was set to have participants complete the 86 question online survey and participate in a phone interview with the researcher. The researcher set out to recruit 10 participants but was only able to successfully recruit four. Each participant was sent a retail gift card via e-mail upon completing the survey and phone interview.

Four participants from Georgia Military College participated in the pilot study that was conducted between April 25, 2015, and May 9, 2015. Each study participant was sent information about the study prior to their participation. Prior to sending the survey link via e-mail the researcher spoke with the participants via phone and introduced herself, explained the procedures of the study, and answered any questions about the study. After ending the call the researcher sent the survey link to the participant's e-mail. Upon completing the survey the participant called the researcher for the phone interview. The researcher asked the survey participant a series of questions about the survey (see Appendix B). The same procedure was followed with each of the four pilot study participants.

Upon the completion of the pilot survey administration the researcher reviewed the pilot test results for time required to complete, missing responses, and any other inconsistencies. The average completion time for the four pilot survey participants was 21.4 minutes. Each participant expressed that they connected with the survey and did not feel like they wanted to quit taking the survey. After reviewing the complete feedback of each pilot study participant, the researcher made the following changes: 1) re-worded specified questions for clarity, 2) added more options for some multiple response items, 3) changed support related questions that were single response items to multiple response

items (select all that apply), 4) added a text box entry to the "other" selections, and 5) added instructions about the length requirement of open-ended response items. After a full review of the results, the final revisions to the questionnaire were conducted before the full launch of the survey. The final version of the Latina/o Social and Cultural Capital Questionnaire (LSCQ) consisted of 85 closed-ended and open-ended questions with contingency items included.

Permissions and Ethical Considerations

In order to conduct this mixed methods study approval from the IRB at Valdosta State University was requested and received (see Appendix A). The IRB of the sponsoring institution is responsible for protecting the rights of participants and assessing the level of risk involved with their participation in the research study (Creswell, 2009, 2011; Mertens, 2005). On March 2, 2015, the researcher was granted exemption status from the Valdosta State University IRB and then began pilot testing the online survey shortly after. The researcher was also required to gain study approval from the IRBs of nine additional institutions in order to recruit their students for participation in the online survey. In the months of June and July of 2015, the researcher was granted exemption status by the IRBs of eight institutions and received administrative approval to conduct research from one institution (see Appendix A). The remaining four institutions did not require a review by their IRBs. After receiving all necessary permissions the researcher began the data collection in August 2015.

All participants in the study were required to sign an informed consent form before participating in any part of the study. Participants in the online survey were required to read the informed consent form and indicate their consent by checking a box

before being able to proceed to the survey. The focus group participants were also required to read and provide their signature to confirm their consent before participating. The informed consent form provided participants with the following information: 1) identity of the researcher; 2) researcher's institutional sponsor; 3) research purpose; 4) the level of participation; 5) benefits of participation; 6) possible risks of participation; 7) confidentiality guarantee; 8) participants' right to terminate participation; 9) incentives for participation; and 10) points of contact for making inquiries (Creswell, 2009; Mertens, 2005).

The researcher informed the participants that their participation was voluntary and they could choose to terminate their participation at any time. Participants were also informed that all data collected and analyzed during the study would be owned by the researcher. All data collected and analyzed would be kept confidential. The researcher made every effort to maintain the anonymity of all participants in the study. No directly identifying information was collected during any part of the study. In Phase I, each online survey participant was provided an anonymous survey link that allowed him/her to access the survey (Fink, 2013). The researcher used survey software that had a Secure Socket Layer (SSL), which protected participant responses by encrypting it, which would prevent interception or use by others on the internet (Fink, 2013).

In Phase II, the identity of the participants in the focus groups was protected by requiring each participant to select a pseudonym that was used during the focus group session. This choice of pseudonym was made at check-in when the participants reviewed and signed the informed consent using their selected pseudonym (see Appendix H). Focus group participants were not required to provide their true name or any other

identifiable information. The participants were notified that the focus group sessions would be audio recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis. Data collected from the online survey and focus group sessions were stored in a secure location and would be maintained for a reasonable period of time (Creswell, 2009). After that point all information would be destroyed.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher was the sole investigator in this sequential explanatory mixed methods study. In the first, quantitative phase the researcher conducted the online surveys and analyzed the data using descriptive statistics within the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) package. The researcher analyzed open-ended responses from the survey using content analysis. The researcher used the findings from the quantitative analysis to guide the development of the focus group questions used in the qualitative phase. The researcher developed five focus group interview questions that explored the findings from the quantitative analysis.

In the second, qualitative phase the researcher served as the moderator for the two focus group interviews conducted. The researcher used the previously developed focus group questions to guide the focus group interview. The researcher utilized probing questions in order to gain an explanation for the quantitative findings of Phase I and to gain further insight into the transition experiences of Latinas. The analysis of all qualitative data was conducted by the researcher. The researcher audio recorded the two focus group sessions and transcribed each of them. The researcher used QSR Nvivo 11 qualitative software to identify codes and themes from the focus group transcripts. The

integrative analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data was then conducted by the researcher.

The researcher's role in this study was participatory. The researcher was involved in the study at every level of design and implementation. The researcher is an African American female who has witnessed the barriers that Latinas in Georgia high schools often faced when attempting to transition from high school to higher education. She has served as a transition agent for Latina high school students by providing information and assistance to help them access higher education. In order to limit the potential for researcher bias extensive verification procedures were implemented. Member checks, triangulation of findings, and rich descriptions were used to insure the accuracy of results. The researcher's dissertation advisor also audited all researcher procedures during data collection and data analysis.

Phase I: Quantitative Data Collection

Sampling

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for Phase I of the study with a goal of at least 200 participants. The target population for this study is Latina undergraduate students at Georgia institutions of higher education who have graduated from a high school in Georgia. Purposeful or criterion sampling is the best choice for this study because in order to find out about the transition experience of Latinas from Georgia high schools to higher education is to seek them out because they are rich with experience (Babbie, 1990; Mertens, 2005). Therefore the criteria for participation in the study are that the individual must be Latina, a Georgia high school graduate, and a current undergraduate student at a Georgia institution of higher education.

All Latinas in the distribution lists provided by each participating institution were sent an e-mail invitation providing information about the purpose, nature, and benefit of the study. Colleges/universities that did not provide the researcher access to their listserv sent the e-mail invitation out for the researcher at the specified time. Each e-mail invitation contained an anonymous survey link that allowed the participants access to the survey (see Appendix F). Adherence to the sample criterion was built into the survey questions to prevent the survey from being completed by individuals that did not meet the criterion of the target population for the study. As a result of the researcher's recruitment efforts, 502 Latina undergraduate students from 14 colleges and universities within the University System of Georgia participated in the online survey (see Table 5).

Table 5

Number of Latina Study Participants from Each College/University

College	N	Percentage
University of North Georgia	162	32.4%
University of Georgia	103	20.6%
Dalton State College	57	11.4%
Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College	37	7.4%
Georgia Gwinnett College	36	7.2%
Valdosta State University	30	6.0%
Kennesaw State University	27	5.4%
South Georgia College	21	4.2%
Georgia Southern University	10	2.0%
Columbus State University	9	1.8%
Georgia College and State University	4	0.8%
College of Coastal Georgia	2	0.4%
Georgia Highlands College	1	0.2%
Georgia State University	1	0.2%
Total	500	100%
Missing	2	
Total	502	

Note. There were a total of 502 participants in the study. Two participants did not respond; N = 500.

Data Collection

In the first phase of this descriptive mixed methods study, information about the transition experiences of Latina undergraduate students in Georgia from high school to higher education was gathered via an online survey. This first phase laid the foundation of the study and provided guidance into Phase II by addressing all three research questions at the descriptive level. Phase I directly addressed Research Questions 2 and 3 because the participants participating in the survey were specifically asked about what

types of transition services and support they received, if any, and how often or how long they received these services. The online survey also shed light on research questions one through combinations of surveys questions that provided information on the transition services received and the forms of social and cultural capital used to assess higher education. Ultimately, the findings from the online survey of Phase I were used to develop the second phase of the study.

An anonymous link to the online survey was sent to each participant via e-mail and 14 days were allotted for the completion of the surveys (see Appendix F). The survey was activated on August 24, 2015 and closed on September 6, 2015. In an effort to increase the chances of survey participation email reminders were sent on August 31, 2015, and on September 3, 2015, which was just before the online survey closed.

Phase II: Qualitative Data Collection

Phase II of this mixed methods study consisted of two focus groups. The primary purpose of this phase was to clarify and more deeply investigate the results from the online survey of Latina undergraduates conducted in Phase I. Two focus group studies were conducted in order to discover specific details and perceptions of the transition supports and services that current Latina undergraduate students received at their former high schools that may have assisted them in attending college. The focus group studies directly addressed research question one because they allowed for more in depth exploration into the Latina transition experience, while also addressing questions two and three through participant responses concerning forms of social and cultural capital that helped them transition to higher education. The collective results of the two focus groups

revealed the transition experiences of Latinas in Georgia from high school to college, while also confirming or refuting the findings from the Phase I online surveys.

Focus group studies were chosen for this study because they would provide rich data and a multitude of feedback from individuals within the same cultural group who have similar lived experiences (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Patton, 2002). The focus group would also serve to be empowering and transformative for the participants. The qualitative data for this study was gathered through two focus groups composed of Latina undergraduate students that were held at a Georgia institution of higher education. One focus group was conducted at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) and one was conducted at Valdosta State University (VSU). Each focus group consisted of four to eight participants and was conducted for 1 to 2 hours (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Sampling

The participants in the focus group study consisted of a purposive sample of Latina undergraduate students from two participating colleges/universities within the University System of Georgia. Participation in the study was voluntary. Contact was made with gatekeepers and permission was confirmed to organize and make arrangements to conduct the focus group study on the campus. The on-campus location where the focus group session was held was selected and approved with the institution's gatekeeper. These permissions were gained during the initial contacts with gatekeepers made prior to the beginning of the research study. After gaining IRB approval at ABAC, the researcher contacted an onsite gatekeeper who coordinated the focus group recruitment. E-mail invitations were sent to the target population contained in the

distribution list at VSU requesting participation in the focus group (see Appendix G). The invitations contained information about the purpose, nature, and benefit of participating in the study. An incentive for participation was offered for participation. A simple reply to the e-mail invitation was requested to confirm interest in participating in the focus group.

Data Collection

Each of the focus groups was conducted in a safe, inviting meeting location on the campus of ABAC and VSU. ABAC's focus group was conducted in a conference room of the campus library and VSU's focus group was conducted in a conference room in the College of Education. Five open-ended questions were developed from the results of the online surveys to gain more insight on the transition experiences of Latinas in Georgia (Patton, 2002). All focus group participants were given a brief questionnaire to complete that provided demographic information. The researcher took notes during each focus group and provided participants with a verbal summary of their responses in order to confirm the accurate documentation and understanding of their statements. The focus group discussions were audio recorded for transcription and analysis. ABAC's focus group was conducted on October 8, 2015 and VSU's focus group was conducted on October 27, 2015. The period of time between the focus groups allowed time for transcription, data analysis, and reflection between each session, which allowed for review and editing of questions in order to gain even more insight into findings.

Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected during this descriptive mixed methods study in order to answer the research questions. Therefore both quantitative and

qualitative data analysis methods were used to develop findings and draw conclusions. The first two research questions for this research study were addressed and answered collectively by the online surveys in Phase I and during the two focus group sessions of Phase II. The third research question addressed best practices for providing transition services to Latina high school students in Georgia and could only be answered by analyzing the collective results of all phases of the study and performing analyses across all data sets.

Phase I Data Analysis

The data collected from the online surveys of Latina undergraduates conducted during Phase I of this mixed methods study were analyzed using descriptive statistics to find the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, percentages, frequency distributions, and variability. These statistics were used to determine results and draw conclusions about the transition services provided to Latinas in Georgia high schools and to identify the forms of social and cultural capital that they used to help them reach higher education. Frequencies were calculated for categorical data and were reported in percentages for making comparisons. The data results of the online survey were clarified and confirmed using the data from the two focus groups conducted in Phase II. This step increased the validity of the actual Phase I online surveys (Latina undergraduates) and its findings. Qualitative content analysis was conducted for open-ended items in the survey to identify common themes.

Phase II Data Analysis

The focus group studies were analyzed after the audio recordings had been transcribed. The transcripts were reviewed and coded for themes from each specific

session's qualitative data. A comparative analysis was conducted between the findings from the focus groups with those of the online surveys from Latina undergraduates in the quantitative phase of the study (Patton, 2002). This analysis served the purpose of strengthening the validity and generalizability of the findings from the focus group study.

Integrative Analysis

A comparative analysis was conducted to find commonalities and differences within and across data sets. The qualitative data from the two focus group studies underwent an individual analysis and then was compared to the individual analytical findings from the online surveys of Phase I and Phase II. At the end of each analysis an interpretation was made and each interpretation was reviewed and compared to reach a final conclusion. This combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis, as well as content analysis across data sets answered research question three by describing the best practices for providing transition services to Latina high school students in Georgia.

Lastly, a theoretical analysis was conducted to find themes that were aligned with the study's theoretical frameworks. The findings from quantitative, qualitative, and integrative analyses were further analyzed for themes associated with the Latina/o critical race theory and the community cultural wealth model. The theoretical analysis confirmed whether racism was a normal part of life for Latina high school students in Georgia and whether it played a role in their access to higher education. It also confirmed whether Latinas had cultural wealth that helped them overcome barriers to higher education. Overall, the results of the theoretical analysis supported or refuted the use of the Latina/o critical race theory and the community cultural wealth model as the theoretical frameworks for this study.

Chapter IV

SURVEY FINDINGS

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the study to include its purpose, design, and three research questions that guided the study. The reporting of the results will begin with the demographic data for the sample followed by a data analysis of the online survey results as related to the research questions. A summary of the online survey findings will be discussed in terms of how they answered the research questions. The findings from the focus groups will be discussed in terms of how they explained the results of the survey. Next, the results of the integrative analysis will be reported to describe the best practices for helping Latina high school students transition from high school to higher education. Lastly, the results of the theoretical analysis will be reported.

The purpose of this study was to describe the best practices for providing transition services and supports to Latina high school students in the state of Georgia. A sequential explanatory mixed methods design was used to conduct the study. This design allowed the researcher to explore the transition experiences of Latina undergraduates in Georgia, which provided information about the social and cultural capital that they used to reach higher education.

In the quantitative phase of the study, an online survey was conducted that involved participants from fourteen colleges and universities within the University System of Georgia. In the qualitative phase two focus group interviews were conducted to explain the survey results. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are Latina students' experiences in transitioning from high school to higher education?

2. What are the forms of social and cultural capital that Latina students identify as helping them to transition from high school to higher education?

3. What are the perceived best practices for transitioning Latina high school students into institutions of higher education?

Participant Demographic Data

The survey sample consisted of 502 Latina undergraduate students from 14 colleges/universities within the University System of Georgia (USG). The ages of the Latina survey participants ranged from 18 to 33. The majority of the survey participants were age 18-21 (81.7%), with 78.3% of the total participants being born in the United Sates (see Table 6). The vast majority (95.2%) of the survey participants graduated from public high schools representing 71 counties in Georgia (see Appendix J), with very few attending magnet (3.2%) or private (0.4%) schools. During high school 69.2% of the survey participants took Advanced Placement (AP) or PreAP courses while 24.7% participated in the gifted/talented program (see Table 6). Very few reported participation in bilingual education (5.8%), the English Language Learner (ELL) program (3.4%), or receiving migrant education services (2%). Less than one percent of survey participants received special education services (0.6%), and 24.3% reported that they did not participate in any programs or receive any services during high school. The majority of Latinas in the study were recent high school graduates and many of them graduated in 2014 or 2015 (50.8%), while 22.4% graduated in 2013 and 11.4% in 2012 (see Table 7). Thus, most participants were freshmen or sophomores (63.2%) in their perspective

colleges or universities. Less than half (44.2%) of survey participants were the first in their family to attend college (see Table 8). Almost three-fourths (72.5%) of Latina participants received the Georgia HOPE Scholarship to first attend college, while 67.7% received the Pell Grant, and 42.9% received financial support from their parents/family. Less frequently select financial aid sources can be found in Table 8.

Table 6

Latina Demographic Data

Demographic Category	Groups	Percentage	N
Age	18-21 years	81.7%	407
	22-25 years	14.8%	74
	26-29 years	2.0%	10
	30 or Over	1.6%	7
Place of Birth	United States	78.3%	393
	Mexico	10.6%	53
	South America	4.6%	23
	Central America	3.6%	18
	Puerto Rico	1.4%	7
	Cuba	0.6%	3
	Dominican Republic	0.4%	2
	Europe	0.4%	2
Type of High School Attended	Public	95.2%	478
	Magnet	3.2%	16
	Religious/Parochial	1.2%	6
	Private College-Prep	0.4%	2
Academic Program Participation	Advanced Placement(AP) or PreAP	69.2%	344
	Gifted/Talented Program	24.7%	123
	Bilingual Education	5.8%	29
	English Language Learner (ELL)	3.4%	17
	Migrant Education Services	2.0%	10
	Special Education	0.6%	3
	No special programs/services	24.3%	121

Table 7

High School Graduation Year

Graduation Year	Percentage	N
2015	28.4%	142
2014	22.4%	112
2013	22.4%	100
2012	11.4%	57
2011	7.6%	38
2010	3.8%	19
2009	1.0%	5
2008	2.4%	12
2007	0.8%	4
2006	0.4%	2
2005	0.4%	2
2004	0.4%	2
2003	0.6%	3
2002	0.2%	1
2000	0.2%	1

Table 8

College-Related Demographic Data

Demographic Category	Groups	Percentage	N
College Status	Freshman	35.3%	177
	Sophomore	27.9%	140
	Junior	20.8%	104
	Senior	16.0%	80
First in Family to Attend College	Yes	44.2%	222
	No	55.8%	280
Financial Aid Received	Georgia HOPE Scholarship	72.5%	363
	Pell Grant	67.7%	339
	Parents/Family	42.9%	215
	Self-payment	30.7%	154
	Student Loans	28.7%	144
	Other Scholarships	28.5%	143

Summary of Demographics

The vast majority of Latina survey participants were U.S. citizens, aged 18-21, who graduated from public high schools in various parts of Georgia. The majority of Latina survey respondents participated in Advanced Placement (AP) or PreAP academic programming while in high school. Just under one-fourth of survey participant received no special services/academic programming. Very few participants received services or programming through bilingual education, ELL, migrant education services, or special education. The majority were recent graduates who were freshmen or sophomores at their current colleges/universities and were recipients of the Georgia HOPE Scholarship

and the Pell Grant. Slightly less than half of the survey participants were first generation college students.

Social Capital

Type of Assistance Provided by High School Counselors. Out of 502 Latina undergraduate participants surveyed, only 41.4% (208) were provided with one-on-one individualized college information from their high school counselors (see Table 9). Over half (58.6%, $f = 294$) of participants reported that they did not receive individualized college information from their counselor.

Table 9

Individualized, One-on-One College Information Provided by Counselor

Individualization Provided	%	N
Yes	41.4%	208
No	58.6%	294

The survey further explored the frequency and type of services provided by school counselors to Latina high school students in Georgia (see Table 10). The top five most frequently provided services by counselors at least one or more times to survey participants was assistance "signing up for the SAT/ACT exams" (76%), making academic "course selections" (74%), "fee waivers for SAT/ACT" (65.1%), "scholarship" (64.9%), and college applications (61.6%). The least frequently provided services by school counselors were assistance "writing essays for college applications" (35.2%), "requesting letters of recommendation" (50.1%), "applying for financial aid/filling out FAFSA" (52.7%), and "career/job selection" (56.4%). It is quite notable that a trend exists in the frequency of the counselor services provided to survey participants. As the

continuum of counselor services moves from generic and routine to requiring more individualization and time, the services are less frequently received by participants. As shown in Table 10, the shift in the data from generic to individualized can be seen at the point of "choosing a college" and "long-term educational plans."

Table 10

Frequency of Counselor Services Provided During High School

Assistance Provided	Never	At Least Once	Twice	3 Times or More	N
Signing up for SAT/ACT	23.4%	34.7%	18.0%	23.8%	499
Course selections	25.9%	32.5%	15.2%	26.5%	499
Fee waiver for SAT/ACT	34.9%	26.9%	17.4%	20.8%	499
Scholarships	36.1%	30.9%	11.8%	21.2%	501
College applications	38.4%	26.4%	14.1%	21.1%	497
Choosing a college	40.4%	28.3%	12.2%	19.1%	498
Long-term education plans	40.8%	25.1%	12.7%	21.5%	498
Career/job selection	43.6%	30.6%	10.4%	15.4%	500
Applying for financial aid/filling out FAFSA	47.3%	24.2%	9.4%	19.0%	499
Requesting letters of recommendation	49.9%	22.5%	10.3%	17.3%	497
Writing essays for college applications	64.8%	16.0%	6.0%	13.2%	500

A little over half (52.7%) of participants reported receiving counselor help with "applying for financial aid/filling out FAFSA" at least once or more, though most (24.2%) only received assistance one time, and almost half (47.3%) never received any help. A similar pattern can be seen with counselor provided assistance with "career/job selection." Over half (56.4%) of participants received "career/job selection" assistance

but most (30.6%) only got this assistance from the counselor one time. On average, 40.5% (203) of survey participants never received any services from their high school counselor.

Counselor Encouragement. In terms of counselor encouragement, 59.8% of the survey participants reported that their counselors encouraged them to attend a 4-year university (see Table 11). Almost 25% were encouraged to attend a 2-year college and 19% were encouraged to attend technical/vocational college. Very few participants (less than 7%) were discouraged from pursuing any postsecondary options.

Table 11

Encouragement by Counselor

Postsecondary Option	Encouraged Me	Said Nothing	Discouraged Me	N
2-yr college	24.9%	68.6%	6.4%	497
4-yr university	59.8%	37.8%	2.4%	502
Technical College	18.9%	77.5%	3.7%	493

Teacher Assistance with Transition Process. Almost 60% of Latina survey participants indicated that during high school "some" of their teachers provided information about college, 22.1% reported that most teachers did, while only 8% indicated that all of their teachers provided college information (see Table 12).

Table 12

Number of Teachers Providing College Information in General

Teachers Providing Information	Percentage	Frequency
All	8.0%	40
Most	22.1%	111
Some	57.6%	289
None	12.4%	62

As shown in Table 13, data from the survey indicated that AP/PreAP teachers were more likely to provide college information to Latina students when compared to teachers from other special programs. Approximately 40.2% received information from "some" of their AP/PreAP teachers, while 46.9% received information from "most" to "all" of their AP/PreAP teachers. Though Latina participants who received ELL services made up a smaller portion of the sample, the data showed that ELL teachers were the least likely to provide college information. Furthermore, participants who received instruction from general education teachers (non-specialized) were the most likely to receive college information from "some" of their teachers, but the least likely to receive information from "all" of their teachers (see Table 13).

Table 13

Teachers Providing College Information by Academic Program

Teacher Type	All	Most	Some	None	N
AP/PreAP Teachers	20.7%	26.2%	40.2%	12.8%	343
Gifted/Talented Teachers	17.9%	29.3%	28.5%	24.4%	123
General Education Teachers	4.1%	17.4%	54.5%	24.0%	121
Bilingual Education Teachers	20.7%	20.7%	34.5%	24.1%	29
ELL Teachers	17.6%	17.6%	29.4%	35.3%	17
Migrant Education Service Providers	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	10
Special Education Teachers	66.7%	33.3%	0%	0%	3

Note. General education teachers are non-specialized teachers who provided instruction to Latinas who did not participate in special programs or receive special services.

Teacher Encouragement. Overall, 82.6% of survey participants indicated that their teachers encouraged them to attend a 4-year university (see Table 14). Less than 10% were discouraged from any postsecondary options by their teachers. At least 56.8% of participants reported that alternative options such as 2-year colleges and technical colleges were not often mentioned or discussed by their teachers.

Table 14

Encouragement from Teacher

Post-Secondary Options	Encouraged Me	Said Nothing	Discouraged Me	N
2-yr college	34.2%	56.8%	9.0%	488
4-yr university	82.6%	16.8%	0.6%	493
Technical College	27.8%	66.0%	6.2%	485

Assistance from Extracurricular Activities and Community Volunteerism. The majority of Latina survey participants (85.1%) indicated that they were involved in extracurricular activities during high school (see Table 15). Out of these 427 Latinas,

201 (47.3%) reported that they received college information from fellow members, coaches, or advisors through these activities. Ultimately, 40% of the total survey participants received college information as result of their participation in extracurricular activities.

Survey results showed that even fewer Latinas who participated in community volunteer work received college information through their interactions. When asked about volunteerism, 310 (61.8%) Latinas indicated that they had participated in volunteer work during high school (see Table 15). Only 59 (19%) of those volunteering gained college information through their interactions with other volunteers and organizers. Overall, 11.8% of total survey participants received college information through volunteerism. For complete reporting of all frequencies see Appendix K.

Table 15

College Information Received through Extracurricular Activities and Volunteerism

Activity Type	Participated			Received Information		
	Yes	No	N	Yes	No	n
Extracurricular	85.2%	14.8%	501	47.3%	52.7%	425
Volunteerism	62.0%	38.0%	500	19.0%	81.0%	310

Note. Survey respondents who participated in extracurricular and volunteerism were prompted to indicate whether they received college information as a result of their participation.

Latina Participation in Special College Preparation Programs or College Summer Programs. Out of 502 survey participants, only 30 (6.0%) indicated that they participated in a college preparation program (i.e., AVID, Upward Bound, GEAR Up, etc.) during high school (see Table 16). When these same participants were asked about

their participation in a summer program on a college campus during their high school years only 51 (10.2%) reported participating in such programs (see Table 16).

Table 16

Participation in College Preparation and Summer Programs

Program Type	Group	Percentage	N
College Preparation Program	Yes	6.0%	30
	No	94.0%	470
Summer Program (College Campus)	Yes	10.2%	51
	No	89.8%	451

The majority of the 30 Latinas who participated in college preparation programs received information about the program from a teacher (36.7%, $f = 11$), counselor (13.3%, $f = 4$), or program recruiter (10%, $f = 3$). The full report of informants about the college preparation program can be found in Appendix L.

Mentor Assistance During High School. Very few Latina participants reported having a mentor during high school. Out of 502 respondents only 110 (21.9%) reporting that they had a mentor while over three-fourths (78.1%, $f = 392$) did not.

Assistance Provided by Colleges to Latina High School Students. Less than half (43.5%, $f = 217$, N = 499) of Latina survey participants received assistance from their current college in order to gain admission, while 23.2% ($f = 116$, N = 501) reported that they received assistance from another college. As shown in Table 17, Latina participants who received assistance from their current college indicated that they were mainly assisted through college mailings (56.3%) and college visitation days (51.6%). Very few received direct assistance with filling out the college application (30.2%) or filling out

financial aid paperwork (35.8%). Only 36.3% of Latina participants reported meeting their current college's recruiter through a high school visit.

Table 17

Assistance Provided by Current College

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Mailings	121	56.3%
Campus visitation days	111	51.6%
College recruiter visits to high school	78	36.3%
Assistance filling out financial aid	77	35.8%
Assistance filling out college application	65	30.2%
College recruiter phone calls	27	12.6%
College recruiter visit to home	1	0.5%
Other	17	
Scholarships	9	4.2%
Dual enrollment	3	1.4%
Financial aid assistance	3	1.4%
Apply to College Day Event	1	0.5%
College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) Recruiter	1	0.5%

Notes. Only 217 (43.5%) indicated that their current colleges provided assistance; N = 215.

Summary of Social Capital

The results of the online survey indicated that counselors and teachers were the main forms of social capital that helped Latina survey participants transition from high school to higher education. Counselors and teachers both encouraged college attendance, but provided limited assistance with the transition process. Most survey participants did

not receive individualized college information from their counselors. Services requiring individual assistance were least frequently provided by counselors. Counselors mainly provided more generic services, such as course selections, signing up for admissions exams, scholarship information, and career choices and future. However, teachers provided more encouragement to Latinas for college attendance than counselors. More specifically, AP/PreAP teachers were more likely to provide college information than other types of teachers.

Social interactions gained through extracurricular activities provided some college information while volunteerism led to very little. Furthermore, during high school, the vast majority of participants had not participated in a college preparation program or summer program (on a college campus) and did not have a mentor. Lastly, survey participants received limited assistance from their current college for transitioning to college. Their current college mainly provided mailings and campus visitation days with little assistance being provided for completing college and financial aid paperwork.

Cultural Capital

Latina Post-secondary Aspirations. The vast majority of survey participants (78.2%) indicated that they had always wanted to go to college (see Table 18). Participants who did not always have college aspirations mainly decided in high school (14%). Few survey participants reported forming college aspirations in middle school (4.2%) or elementary/primary school (3.6%).

Table 18

College Aspirations

Time of Decision	Frequency	Percentage
I have always wanted to go to college	392	78.2%
High school	70	14.0%
Middle school	21	4.2%
Elementary/Primary school	18	3.6%

Note. N = 501.

As shown in Table 19, the majority of Latinas deciding in high school made the decision to attend college during their junior (31.4%) or senior year (35.7%). Fewer participants reported forming college aspirations in the ninth and tenth grades.

Table 19

High School Grade of College Aspirations

Grade	Frequency	Percentage
9th	14	20.0%
10th	9	12.9%
11th	22	31.4%
12th	25	35.7%

Note. N = 70. This survey item (Q16) was a contingency question. Only survey participants indicating that they decided to attend college in high school (Q15) were prompted to answer this question.

Almost three-fourths of Latina participants indicated the desire to ultimately achieve a postgraduate degree (71.2%, $f = 357$). More specifically, most participants wished to attain a master's degree (see Table 20), while only 14 desired an associates degree. Almost one-fourth of Latina participants desired to attain doctorate degrees and a small percentage (13.4%) desired to go into medicine or law.

Table 20

Degree Aspirations

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Associates (A.A.)	14	2.8%
Bachelor's (B.A., B.S., etc.)	131	26.1%
Master's (M.A., M.S., etc.)	175	34.9%
Ph.D. or Ed.D. (Doctorate)	115	22.9%
M.D., D.O., D.D.S., or D.V.M. (Medicine)	45	9.0%
J.D. (Juris Doctorate, Law)	22	4.4%

Note. N = 502.

Sources of Information About College Admission Requirements. Over half (58.2%), $f = 291$, N = 500) of survey participants took the initiative to search for information about college admission requirements on their own. As shown in Table 21, the internet was the main source of information for Latina participants. High school counselors were the second information source of choice; teachers were the third, followed by friends, mailings, and college recruiters. Classmates and family members were less frequently selected as a source of information about college admission requirements (see Table 21). The percentage of participants who used the internet indicates that this resource was valuable to Latinas who searched on their own.

Table 21

Information Source for Requirements to Getting into College

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Internet	269	53.8%
High school counselor	183	36.6%
Teacher	137	27.4%
Friends	122	24.4%
Mailings	109	21.8%
College recruiter	106	21.2%
Classmates	97	19.4%
Brother/Sister	87	17.4%
Parents/Guardians	59	11.8%
Relatives	44	8.8%
Mentor	18	3.6%
Sports coach	13	2.6%
Migrant education counselor	10	2.0%
Club advisor	9	1.8%
Principal or Assistant Principal	5	1.0%
College applied to	1	0.2%
College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP) Recruiter	1	0.2%
College preparation program	1	0.2%

Note. Two participants did not respond (N = 500). Participants were allowed to select multiple sources of information.

Parent/Guardian Assistance with College Transition Process. When given several options and being allowed to select multiple individuals, Latina respondents most frequently selected their parents/guardians as being "most helpful" with the application process and "especially helpful" to them getting into college. In terms of helpfulness, Latina participants consistently selected friends as the second most helpful, teachers came

in third, siblings were the fourth most helpful, and counselors came in fifth (see Figure 2). For complete reporting of these results please see Appendix M and Appendix N.

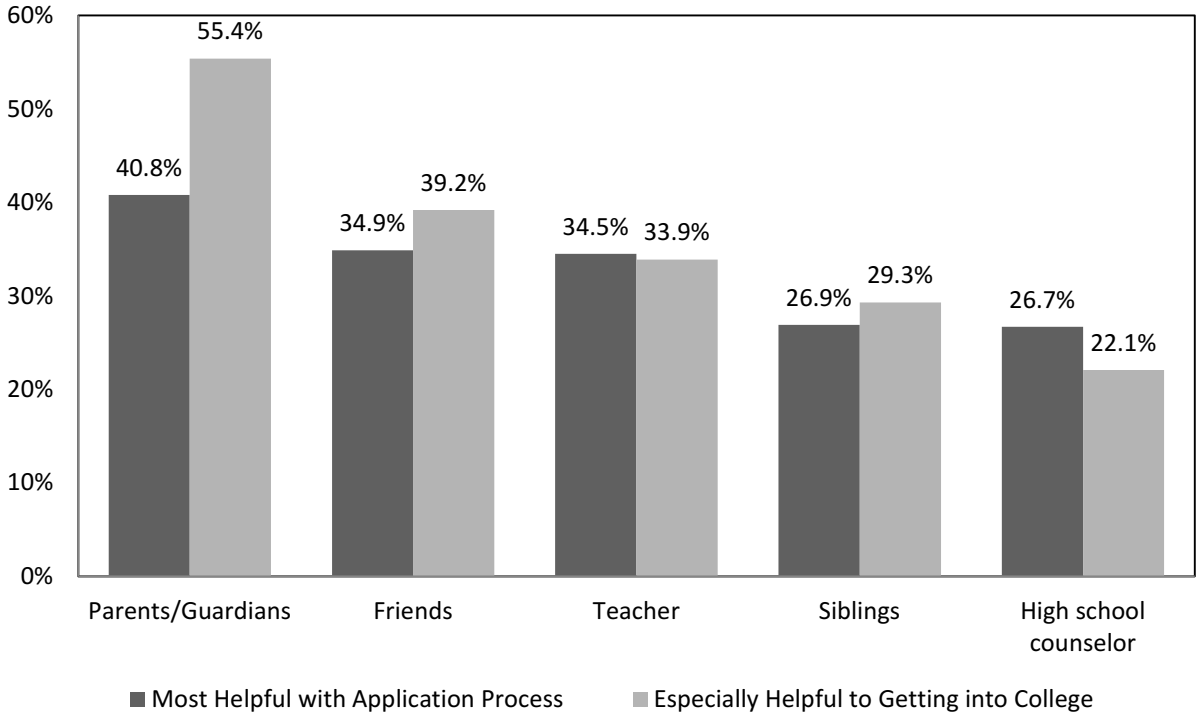

Figure 2. Bar graph of most helpful forms of social and cultural capital for transitioning from high school to higher education (N = 502). Two different survey items gave Latina survey participants the option to select multiple individuals for being most helpful with the college application process (Q30) and for being especially helpful to getting into college (Q58).

In light of the individuals who were most helpful with the application process, the survey also showed that no individual was frequently selected at 50% or higher. There were 85 (16.9%) Latinas who found no one to be helpful with the application process and 56 (11.2%) participants found no one "especially helpful" for getting into college. These result indicated that multiple individuals were beneficial in different ways, and some Latinas did not receive any help.

Parent/Guardian Educational Level. Though most parents/guardians had very little knowledge about the college-going process, Latina survey respondents indicated

that they were the most helpful with the transition process. Only 22.9% of the parents/guardians had earned an associate's degree or higher and 52.6% had completed less than a high school education (see Table 22). Despite their own lack of a college education, these findings indicated that parents/guardians played a major role in helping Latinas transition from high school to higher education. Please see Appendix O to view the full educational level reports for mothers/female guardians and fathers/male guardians.

Table 22

Parents/Guardians' Overall Education Level

Education Level	Percentage	Frequency
Graduate degree or higher	6.4%	62
Bachelors degree	11.5%	111
Associates degree	5.0%	48
Some college	11.1%	107
High school diploma/GED	13.4%	130
Some high school	14.5%	140
Middle school/junior high	18.6%	180
Elementary/primary school	19.5%	189
Total	100%	967

Note. N = 967. The frequencies for each educational level for both parents have been combined to calculate the total education for the father/male guardian and mother/female guardian.

Parents/Guardians' Value of Education. Contrary to the message sent by their own level of education, the results of the survey indicated that both parents/guardians of Latina participants highly valued education. As shown in Table 23, 87.4% of Latinas indicated that education was "very important" to their mother/female guardian, while 81.9% of them indicated that their father/male guardian held the same opinion.

According to Latina respondents, a very small percentage of their parents/guardians considered education to be unimportant.

Table 23

Parent/Guardian's Value of Education

Parent/ Guardian	Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Little Importance	Not Important	N
Mother/Female Guardian	87.4%	7.2%	3.6%	0.8%	1.0%	500
Father/Male Guardian	81.9%	8.5%	6.3%	1.2%	2.2%	496

Parent/Guardian Encouragement for College Attendance. According to the responses of Latina survey participants, the majority were encouraged to attend a college/university by their parents/guardians. As shown in Table 24, the vast majority of Latina participants were encouraged by both their mothers/female guardians and their father/male guardians to attend 2-year or 4-year college. Participants more frequently selected their mother/female guardian (90.8%) as encouraging them than their fathers/male guardians (82.6%). Very few Latinas reported that they had been discouraged from attending a 2-year or 4-year college by their parents/guardians. The results also showed that attending technical colleges was not frequently discussed or discouraged by these parents/guardians.

The results also indicated that participants' mothers/female guardians were more vocal on issues concerning post-high school options (see Table 24). Mothers/female guardians least frequently "said nothing" (6.4%) as compared to fathers/male guardians (15.2%). It is also notable that a higher percentage of Latinas reported that their

parents/guardians discouraged them from getting married and starting a family versus being encouraged to take this pathway. Very few Latina respondents were encouraged to get married and start a family, which was the post-high school option that was least encouraged by parents/guardians.

Table 24

Encouragement by Parents/Guardians

Post-High School Option	Encouraged Me	Said Nothing	Discouraged Me	N
Mother/Female Guardian				
2-yr or 4-yr college	90.8%	6.4%	2.8%	502
Technical College	31.1%	51.0%	15.1%	488
Get married & start a family	12.2%	29.5%	56.6%	492
Father/Male Guardian				
2-yr or 4-yr college	82.6%	15.2%	2.2%	501
Technical College	31.2%	58.6%	10.2%	490
Get married & start a family	8.2%	41.9%	49.9%	489

Parent/Guardian Influence on Educational Goals and Family Decisions. Mothers/female guardians as the cornerstone of the Latina/o family were strongly expressed in the responses of the Latina survey participants. Almost two-thirds of participants reported that their mother/female guardian had the greatest influence on the development of their education goals (66.0%) and on family decisions (62.2%); (see Table 25). Fathers/male guardians were less frequently reported as influencing over educational goals (34.0%) and family decisions (37.8%).

Table 25

Parental/Guardian Influence on Educational Goals and Family Decisions

	Educational Goals		Family Decisions	
Parent/Guardian	*f*	%	*f*	%
Mother/female guardian	330	66.0%	310	62.2%
Father/male guardian	170	34.0%	188	37.8%
Total	500	100.0%	498	100.0%

Important Values Stressed by Parents/Guardians. Latinas taking the online survey were asked about the important values that their parents/guardians stressed throughout their lives. As shown in Table 26, according to Latinas, the importance of "hard work" was most frequently stressed by their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians also stressed "getting a good education," "*respeto,*" "doing better than they have done," and "high moral values." Integrity, perseverance, and loyalty were also frequently stressed. *Familioso* were stressed values reported by a minimum of two-thirds of participants. A full listing of values can be seen in Table 26.

Table 26

Important Values Stressed by Parents/Guardians Throughout Life

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Hard work	487	97.0%
Get a good education	479	95.4%
Respect (respeto)	465	92.6%
Do better than they have done	447	89.0%
High moral values	435	86.7%
Integrity	388	77.3%
Perseverance	383	76.3%
Loyalty	381	75.9%
Familioso	318	63.3%
Other	19	4.2%
Faith in God	4	0.8%
Keep God first in my life	2	0.4%
Be proud of our culture and people	1	0.2%
Be responsible	1	0.2%
Be someone in life	1	0.2%
Be the best that I could be	1	0.2%
Do not be a stereotype	1	0.2%
Do what you want to do	1	0.2%
Gratitude	1	0.2%
Independence	1	0.2%
Initiative and inner motivation	1	0.2%
Love everyone	1	0.2%
Sacrifice	1	0.2%
Take advantage of opportunities	1	0.2%
Wait to start a family	1	0.2%

Note. N = 502.

Impact of Consejos on Latina College Attendance. *Consejos* or storytelling was often reported in the Latina/o culture to provide guidance and wisdom. Out of 502 Latina survey participants, 467 (93%) indicated that their parents/guardians told them stories about their own lives, their family, or ancestors. These stories were usually told by both parents/guardians (60.6%, $f = 283$), while 27.8% ($f = 130$) reported that their mothers/female guardians were the usual storytellers, and 11.6% ($f = 54$) indicated that their father/male guardian was the usual storyteller.

A large majority (87.1%, $f = 406$, N = 466) of Latinas in the study reported that they were encouraged to attend college as a result of these stories. Only 60 (12.9%) Latinas were not encouraged by these types of stories. These family stories of struggle and perseverance motivated these Latinas to work hard and get a college education so that they could have a better life than their parents.

Friend Encouragement for Attending College. The majority (72.3%) of Latina survey participants reported having a friend that encouraged them to attend college (see Table 27). Not only did their friend encourage them to attend, but 92.6% (336) of participants indicated that the same friend also went on to attend college. Almost half of these encouraging friends (50.0%) attended the same college as the survey participant. These results indicated that Latina survey participants and their friends had strong connections and shared common aspirations for attending college. Moreover, friends were consistently indicated as the second "most helpful" with the college application process and the second "especially helpful" individual for getting into college (refer to Table 27; see Appendix M and Appendix N). The friends of Latina survey participants

only came second to their parents/guardians for their helpfulness with the transition process.

Table 27

Encouragement by Friends to Attend College

Category	Group	Percentage	N
Friend encouraged college attendance	Yes	72.3%	363
	No	27.7%	139
Friend attended college	Yes	92.6%	336
	No	7.4%	27
Friend attended your current college	Yes	50.0%	168
	No	50.0%	168

Assistance Received Through Church Attendance. As shown in Table 28, over two-thirds of Latina participants attended church during their high school years. Out of the 356 who attended church, 73 reported that they received college information/support from individuals at church that was helpful to getting into college. The college information/support that participants received most frequently came from their youth pastor (68.5%) followed by church friends (50.7%), adult church members (43.8%), and their pastor/priest (39.7%). Participants least frequently received information/support from a Sunday school teacher or mentor at church. Overall, interactions through church attendance did not often provide college information or support for attending college.

Table 28

Assistance Provided Through Church Attendance

Category	Groups	%	*f*
Attended Church	Yes	70.9%	356
	No	29.1%	146
Received College Information/Support	Yes	20.5%	73
	No	79.5%	283
Individuals from Church Who Helped	Youth Pastor	68.5%	50
	Church Friends	50.7%	37
	Adult Church Members	43.8%	32
	Pastor/Priest	39.7%	29
	Sunday School Teacher	12.3%	9
	Choir Director	5.5%	4
	Mentor	1.4%	1

Summary of Cultural Capital

The forms of cultural capital most often reported by Latina study participants as helpful to their transition from high school to higher education were their aspirations, parents/guardians, *consejos*, cultural values, and their friends. Latinas had very high aspirations for college and advanced degree attainment. The majority of Latina participants sought out information about college admission requirements on their own and used the internet to do so.

Latina participants' parents/guardians highly valued education and highly encouraged college attendance more frequently than any other source. At the same time,

parents/guardians discouraged their Latina daughters from starting a family and having children. More specifically, mothers/female guardians were more encouraging than fathers/male guardians concerning college attendance. Mothers/female guardians had the greatest influence on Latinas' educational goals and on family decisions. They also talked to their daughters more often about post-high school options than fathers/male guardians.

Participants reported that their parents/guardians most frequently stressed the important values of hard work, good education, respect, and a higher quality of life with high moral values. *Consejos* shared by parents/guardians also encouraged the vast majority of Latina participants to attend college. Overall, Latina participants most frequently indicated that their parents/guardians were "most helpful" with the college application process and "especially helpful" to them attending college. Latina/o parents/guardians did not allow their lack of knowledge about the college-going process to prevent them from encouraging their daughters to attend college.

The second most helpful individuals to Latinas for attending college were their friends. The friends in the social circle of Latina survey participants encouraged college attendance and the vast majority of them transitioned to institutions of higher education as well. Half of them attended the same college as Latina survey participants, which indicated a strong bond in their friendships. Again, friends were the second most frequently selected individual for being "most helpful" with the application process and for being "especially helpful" to Latinas getting into college.

Lastly, survey participants' aspirations, parents/guardians, cultural values, *consejos*, and friends were the forms of cultural capital most helpful to them transitioning

from high school to higher education. It is quite notable that parents/guardians and friends as forms of cultural capital were consistently indicated as first and second for being "most helpful" in the transition process. However, interactions resulting from church attendance seldom led to any college information or support.

Transition Services and Support

Type of Assistance Most Frequently Provided by Especially Helpful Individuals. On Question 58 of the survey, 446 of 502 survey participants indicated that someone was "especially helpful" to them getting into college. The 446 participants were then prompted to answer Question 59, which asked them about how these "especially helpful" individuals helped them get into college. Out of 446 possible respondents, 444 responded to Question 59.

More than three-fourths (83.6%) of the 444 respondents indicated that encouragement to attend college was most frequently provided for helping them transition to college by individuals "especially helpful" to them. Assistance with "financial aid information" (67.3%) and "admissions exam registration" (60.4%) were the next most frequently reported types of assistance received that were helpful to them attending college (see Table 29). Slightly over half (52.7% to 53.4%) of respondents indicated that they received "assistance filling out financial aid forms" (53.4%), help "meeting college requirements" (52.9%), and "assistance filling out college applications" (52.7%). Other forms of assistance that were beneficial to Latina participants' transition to higher education were college "campus visits" (41.4%), "finding scholarships" (40.5%), and help with "actual enrollment" (27.9%). A full list of results can be found in Table 29.

Table 29

Type of Assistance Provided by "Especially Helpful" Individuals for Getting into College

Assistance Type	Frequency	Percentage
Encouraging me to attend college	371	83.6%
Financial aid information	299	67.3%
Admissions exam (SAT/ACT) registration	268	60.4%
Assistance filling out financial aid forms	237	53.4%
Meeting college requirements	235	52.9%
Assistance filling out college applications	234	52.7%
Campus visits	184	41.4%
Finding scholarships	180	40.5%
Actual enrollment	124	27.9%
Other	11	2.5%
Writing letters of recommendation	3	0.7%
Encouraging college attendance away from home	1	0.2%
Explained information to parents	1	0.2%
Help deciding which college to attend	1	0.2%
Mutual expectation of college attendance by friend group	1	0.2%
Pairing college classes with high school graduation requirements	1	0.2%
Provided information about college programs geared towards my major	1	0.2%
Provided me with taxi money	1	0.2%
Told me that I had to go to college	1	0.2%
Total	2145	483.1%

Notes. This is a contingency item. Fifty-six participants responded that no one was especially helpful to them on Question 58, so therefore they were not prompted to answer Question 59. Two participants also did not respond to Question 59. N = 444.

Information and Services That Helped Latinas Make a Smoother Transition to College. When asked about which services or support would have helped them make a smoother transition from high school to college, Latinas' responses were directly connected to their obstacles. The majority (69.7%) of Latina respondents indicated that having "more information about financial aid and scholarships" would have helped them make a smoother transition (see Table 30). The second most frequently selected assistance was help preparing the FAFSA and other financial aid paperwork (58.4%). A little more than half of Latinas felt that "help preparing for the ACT/SAT" (51.7%) and "more information about college requirements" (50.7%) would have helped them make a smoother transition (see Table 30). Furthermore, almost half of Latina survey participants reported that they needed "college visits" (45.5%), "help preparing college applications" (43.0%), and "high school counselor support" (42.8%). More information about admissions exams, mentor support, teacher support, and parent support could also have helped resolve the other needs. All responses can be seen in Appendix P.

Table 30

Services or Support That Would Have Helped Make a Smoother Transition to College

Service or Support	Frequency	Percentage
More information about financial aid/scholarships	345	69.7%
Help preparing the FAFSA and other financial aid paperwork	289	58.4%
Help preparing for the SAT or ACT	256	51.7%
More information about college requirements	251	50.7%
College visits	225	45.5%
Help preparing college applications	213	43.0%
High school counselor support	212	42.8%
More information about admissions tests (ACT/SAT/COMPASS)	186	37.6%
Mentors	143	28.9%
Teacher support	125	25.3%
Parent support	124	25.1%

Note. N = 495. Seven participants did not respond to Question 61.

Analysis of Open-Ended Survey Responses

The researcher analyzed the open responses of the survey instrument by coding the data using Nvivo QSR 11 to identify themes. The themes were then analyzed for patterns and commonalities. The type of support addresses the source of support or who provided the service/assistance. The service/assistance provided by a support informs the type of service. The number of references to services or support does not mean that one service or support is more important than another, but it indicates how many individuals referred to a specific service or support that they found most helpful to their transition.

Services/Support That Were Most Helpful to Latinas for Getting into College. Latina participant responses to Question 62, an open-ended survey item, revealed that home, school, college, and friend support were most helpful to them getting into college (see Table 31). More specifically, 10 of the 48 references to parents/guardians were made about the helpfulness of mothers/female guardians. No specific references were made about fathers/male guardians.

As shown in Table 31, mentor support, college preparation programs, and other forms of support were also reported as most helpful to Latina participants, though less frequently cited.

Table 31

Types of Support Most Helpful to Latinas for Getting Into College

Support Theme	References
Home Support	
Parents/guardians	48
Family (general)	25
Siblings	14
No Support	46
School Support	
Teacher	44
Counselor	40
Advanced Academic Programs	9
School (general)	5
Coach	3
Classmates	2
Club/organization	1
College Support	36
Friend Support	26
Mentor Support	12
College Preparation Program	6
Migrant Education Program	2
Church Support	1
Community Support	1
Employer Support	1

Note. N = 363. The table provides the number of references made about each most helpful support in an open-ended response to Question 62 in the survey.

Latina participants who referenced support as being most helpful to them expressed that these individuals or entities had taken the time to encourage them, provided information, or helped them complete paperwork related to their college

application or financial aid documents. In essence, the service or assistance provided by these types of support made them very beneficial to Latina respondents. An observation of the results indicates that there was very infrequent mention of mentor support and a notable number (46) of participants received "no support."

A few survey responses from Latina participants addressing various types of support are as follows:

> The support from my parents was all I needed because even though they didn't have the information about college and all the requirements, they told me to ask and find out on what I could do to attend college. They gave me the desire to go and that's all the support I needed.
>
> Support from my two sisters. They helped me fill out financial aid and helped me regarding what kind of questions I should ask the school whenever I went to register.
>
> One of my teachers was always there to answer any questions about college, the application process, and financial aid. There were also a couple of fairs put on by the HSF foundation that I attended that really helped me understand the SAT and ACT tests and the waivers.
>
> Just someone taking the time to get to know me and talking to me about what my goals in life are. My high school counselor was very patient and got to know me and I feel she led me to make the best decision for my own personal self of what college to go to. We went through and talked about all the small details: dorm life, financial needs, class difficulty, everything that I needed to know based on her professional knowledge and personal experiences. I'm so glad I had her help because no one else could have provided me with better advice and been nicer about it.
>
> My mentor played a big role in trying to attend college. First of all she believed in me when I did not. She also took me to visit colleges and it allowed me to decide what kind of atmosphere I wanted to be in.
>
> I received a lot of support from my friends. They would tell me about a scholarship and send me the applications to apply. They would invite me to college visits whenever they would go. They would also tell me college experiences that their siblings had to help me understand what college was like. They were very encouraging to me.

> The college recruiter was a great help. I truly believe he is the reason I was able to get into my first choice university. He helped me fill in anything that was missing on my FAFSA. He also would check up on me; asking how I was doing in school.

Overall, survey responses from Latina participants revealed that each support was most helpful because they provided service or assistance that was also considered to be most helpful.

As shown in Table 32, services that provided information, individual assistance, encouragement, or financial aid were most helpful to Latinas for transitioning to college. Several survey responses revealed that Latina participants found support highly beneficial when they were kind and took the time to provide them with information, answered questions, helped complete paperwork, or encouraged them.

Table 32

Types of Services Most Helpful to Latinas for Getting Into College

Service Type	References
Information	
College and financial aid information	53
Internet resources	38
Campus visits	18
College fairs	7
Individual counselor meetings	6
Learning from others	5
Application deadlines	5
Mailings	3
E-mails	3
Speakers	1
Total	121
Individual Assistance:	
Filling out paperwork	38
Help with fee waivers	7
Tutoring for admission exams	5
Help writing essays	4
Signing up for admission exams	2
Tutoring (general)	1
Total	57
Encouragement	31
Financial Aid (i.e., scholarships, grants, etc.)	18

Note. N = 363. The table provides the number of references about most helpful services in an open-ended response to Question 62 in the survey.

Out of 502 survey participants almost three-fourths (72.3%, N = 363) answered this open response item concerning services and support that were most helpful to them attending college. This is the highest number of individuals who chose not to respond to the open-ended survey items. The fewer responses may indicate that they did not receive any notable services and support. Forty-nine Latina respondents indicated that no individual was "most helpful" to them and that they did everything on their own.

Information provided about college and financial aid was the most helpful service provided for helping Latina survey participants get into college. There were 53 references to college and financial aid information (53). A few responses addressing college and financial information as being most helpful are as follows:

> One of my teachers was always there to answer any questions about college, the application process, and financial aid.
>
> I was glad there were visitation days to the college I wanted to go to and since it was free I went to two of those visitation days to get as much information as I could.
>
> The program of AVID led me to discover what was needed to get into a good college, and helped me plan my classes for high school accordingly.
>
> Informational meetings about college admissions and financial aid.

Second to college and financial aid information, there were 38 references to the internet being most helpful and 27 of these references identified the internet and its resources as their only and most helpful support. Latina responses addressing the internet or internet resources being most helpful are as follows:

> The internet was by far the most helpful thing I had. My friends were as lost as I was when it came to the application process. And my parents didn't know anything about that.
>
> I mostly did things on my own. I would search up everything online, so the internet was the most helpful.

> The most helpful service I had was probably the college websites. They helped me the most in trying to figure what to do to get into a college.

The analysis of the open responses of Latina survey participants revealed that they consistently identified human support that was most helpful by who and what they did for them. As seen in some of their responses they generally indicated that helpful humans provided them with time, attention, and were committed to helping them get to college. The following Latina participant response is an example of identified human support:

> My teacher was a huge help. He helped me deal with my out of state tuition. He helped me along the process of the applications, essays, and scholarship deadlines. He was moral support for me. I'm very thankful for him, because without him I probably would have given up on college.

This participant's response was very specific about the fact that her teacher encouraged her and took the time to help her with specific tasks and issues related to getting into college. The response did not contain references to services only, but also validated why and how the teacher was helpful.

However, when a direct human support was not cited other general services or resources, such as campus visits, college fairs, application packets, GAcollege411.org, and FAFSA Live Chat were indicated as being "most helpful" to their transition. Many Latina respondents referenced assistance or information that they received without identifying the source, which could indicate that there was no human support.

Summary of Transition Services and Support

Overall, "encouragement to attend college" was the main form of assistance provided to survey participants by those considered "especially helpful" to them getting into college. The services and support that Latinas needed the most were provided to them least frequently. Home and school support were the most helpful to Latinas.

Parents/guardians were indicated as the most helpful of all supports and a key home support. The key school support elements were teachers who were indicated as the second most helpful support and counselors who were considered third.

Collectively, Latina survey participants indicated that the same services considered as most helpful for transitioning from high school to college would have also helped them make a smoother transition. Latina survey participants repeatedly expressed that information, individual assistance, encouragement, and financial aid were important for transitioning from high school to higher education. More specifically, information about college and financial aid and individual assistance completing paperwork were considered most helpful to Latina survey participants. It is noteworthy that "internet resources" was the second most helpful service referenced by survey respondents. Latina participants expressed that they relied on the internet for college and financial aid information, and for assistance completing and understand paperwork through live chat support options.

Results from multiple response items and open response survey items showed that services or support that encouraged Latinas, or provided help with the college admissions process, completing paperwork, or preparing for admissions exams were perceived as most helpful for them. Ultimately, providing Latinas with more information about financial aid/scholarships, college requirements, and admission exams, and more help preparing financial aid/college application forms, and help preparing for admission exams are services that would have helped them make a smoother transition to college.

Critical Race Theory Variables

Racial Demographics of High School and Classes. When asked about the racial composition of the high school from which they graduated, less than half (208) of Latina participants indicated that their high school population was mostly White. Almost the same number (203) of participants indicated the population was half-White. As shown in Figure 3, the classroom setting for Latina respondents was slightly different with over half (262) reporting that their classes consisted of mostly White students.

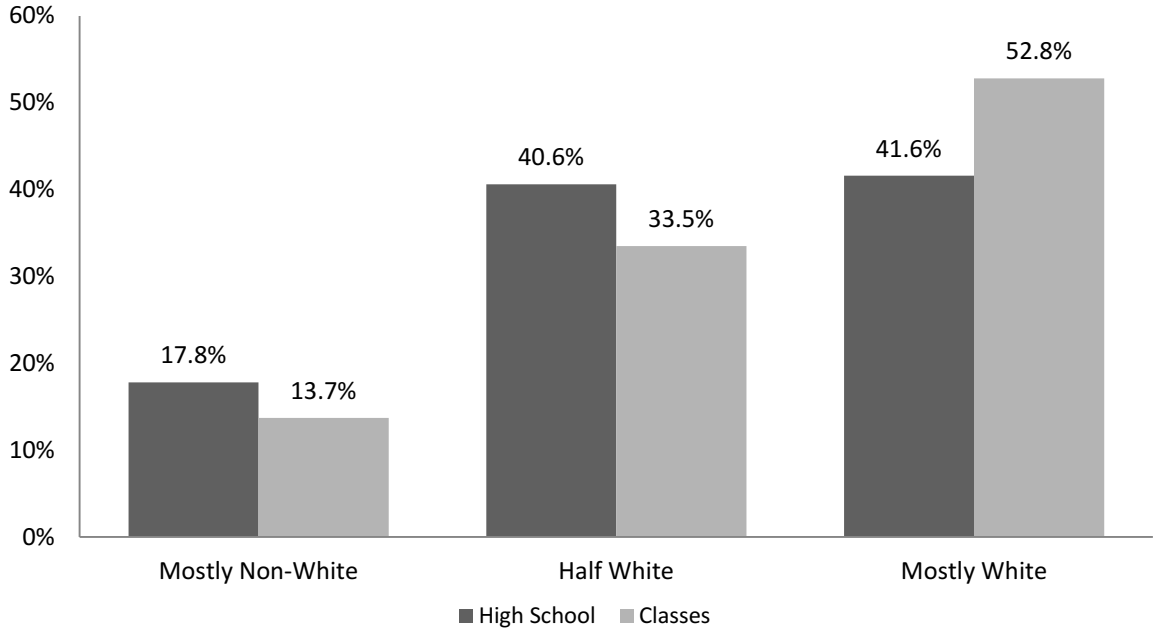

Figure 3. Racial demographics of Latina participants' high school and most of their classes during high school. Demographics of high school (N = 500). Demographics of most of their classes during high school (N = 496).

Latinas' Perception of the Treatment of Other Latina/o Students at Their High School. The vast majority of Latina survey participants reported being treated fairly by their counselors and teachers (see Table 33). Interestingly, they felt that other Latina/o students were not treated as fairly by teachers and counselors as they had been. There is

an 18.1% (92) difference between Latinas' perceptions of how fairly they were treated by teachers when compared to how they rated teachers' treatment of other Latina/o students in their school. Overall, participants felt that they received fair treatment more often from counselors and teachers than other Latina/o students at their high school.

Table 33

Fair Treatment of Latinas and Latina/o Peers During High School

School Agent	Self	N	Latina/o Peers	N
Guidance Counselor				
Yes	78.9%	396	70.3%	350
No	21.1%	106	29.7%	148
Teacher				
Yes	87.6%	438	69.5%	346
No	12.4%	62	30.5%	152

Assimilation for Acceptance During High School. Out of 500 respondents, almost half (49.8%, f = 249) of them indicated that they had to assimilate or act "White" in order to be accepted in high school. On the contrary, 50.2% (251) reported that they did not feel the need to assimilate.

Perceptions of Racial Discrimination in High School. Few Latina participants reported enduring racial discrimination by teachers (14%, f = 70) and counselors (7.6%, f = 38) during high school (see Table 34). In contrast, slightly over half of participants (55.7%, f = 279) reported that other students at their high school had exhibited racially discriminatory actions against them.

Table 34

Racial Discrimination Experienced from Individuals During High School

Individual	Yes	No	N
Guidance counselors	7.6%	92.4%	497
Teachers	14.0%	86.0%	499
Students	55.7%	44.3%	501

Level of Racial Discrimination Experienced During High School. As shown in Figure 4, 78.8% (395) of Latina participants perceived experiencing some level of racial discrimination during high school, while 21.2% (106) reported never experiencing discrimination. In terms of frequency, almost two-thirds (62.7%) of participants reported that they "never" or "rarely" experienced racial discrimination during high school. However, only 8.8% reported experiencing racial discrimination "often" or "always".

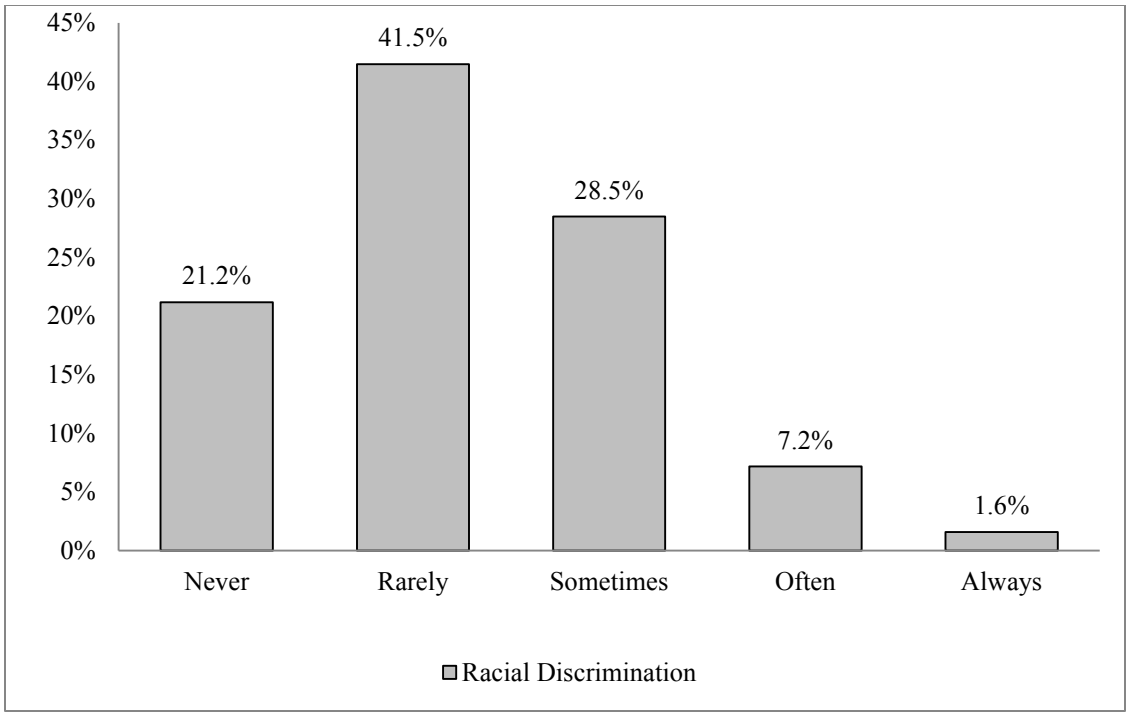

Figure 4. Level of racial discrimination experienced by Latina survey participants during high school (N = 501).

Impact of Racial Discrimination on Desire to Attend College. Slightly over half (55.2%) of Latinas who experienced racial discrimination during high school reported that their desire to attend college was unaffected by their experiences. As shown in Table 35, 43% (169) of Latinas reported that such experiences encouraged them to attend college while only seven (1.8%) participants were discouraged from attending. Regardless of their experiences of racial discrimination, all 395 Latinas graduated from high school and transitioned to college.

Table 35

Impact of Experiences of Racial Discrimination on Desire to Attend College

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Did not make a difference	217	55.2%
Encouraged me to attend college	169	43.0%
Discouraged me from attending college	7	1.8%

Note. N = 393. This was a contingency survey item. Only participants who reported experiencing racial discrimination were prompted to respond to this question.

Perceived Empirical Obstacles

Obstacles to Latinas Reaching Higher Education. In order to gain insight on the high school to college transition experience, Latinas were asked about obstacles that they faced. One open-ended item (Q60) asked Latina participants about what obstacles they faced that could have prevented them from attending college. The content analysis of 443 responses to this question revealed that the lack of financial resources (292) was the greatest obstacle. The lack of information (41), transportation (23), and admission exams (21) were the next most frequently cited obstacles that could have prevented college attendance (see Table 36). Respondents also identified grade point average, citizenship issues, lack of support, family problems, and working as obstacles. There were very few Latinas who did not have any obstacles that would have prevented them from attending college. A full list of obstacles can be found in Appendix Q.

Table 36

Obstacles to Higher Education for Latina High School Graduates

Obstacles	References
Money for college	292
Lack of information	41
Transportation	23
Admission exams	21
Grade point average	18
Citizenship issues	16
Attitude	15
Lack of support	15
Family problems	10
Working	10

Note. N = 443.

Based upon the responses of many Latina respondents, the availability of family funds or access to financial aid could have prevented them from attending college. A few responses that are representative of their financial obstacles are below.

> Money. The root of all evil. At the end of my high school career I found myself accepted into a few colleges but found myself not being able to afford them. I took a year off, found out more about how to pay for school, and saved up money. I am now in my first year of college.
>
> I faced not having enough financial support. I faced the possibility of going into major debt. It was scary investing so much money into a good education. The fear of it not paying off was horrible.
>
> I would not have been able to attend my first year of college without the Pell Grant or HOPE scholarship because my family did not and still does not have the means to pay for my college education.
>
> The obstacle that could have prevented me from attending a college or university is that Georgia does not help out DREAMERS. The prevention of receiving any help by scholarship sometimes makes me lose hope.

As addressed in many survey responses, the lack of money presented a major obstacle for Latinas and their families. Many Latinas expressed how their parents paid out of pocket, borrowed the money from relatives, or how they worked to pay for their own college tuition. The majority of Latina participants and their families went through great lengths to make college attendance possible. As a result of such sacrifices, one Latina wrote: "I constantly feel guilty that instead of helping my family financially by going straight into the workforce, I am being more of a financial strain by going to a four year university." Latinas' decision to attend college had a financial impact on the entire Latina/o family.

Money and financial aid as a major obstacle to college attendance for Latinas was far reaching with connections to the lack of information, transportation, and citizenship issues. The obstacles of transportation (23) and citizenship issues (16), though not referenced as often, were directly related to money or financial aid. Latinas who expressed that transportation for commuting to college was an obstacle also indicated that they could not afford to buy a vehicle. In terms of citizenship, being undocumented resulted in high out-of-state tuition fees and made them ineligible for federal and state sponsored financial aid (i.e., HOPE, Pell Grant, student loans, etc.), as well as other scholarship opportunities. As referenced in survey responses, this caused a major financial burden for undocumented Latinas.

The second most common obstacle was a lack of information, which was frequently connected to financial aid in general. The lack of information was not just at one level, but at many. First, Latinas themselves commented that they lacked information about the admission requirements, the process overall, how to complete

paperwork, and awareness about deadlines. In terms of financial aid, they lacked information about the financial aid process, how to complete the FAFSA, and the availability of scholarships. Latinas also made many comments about how their parents could not assist in the college admission process, because they had not attended college and had no knowledge of how to help them.

The responses that follow are representative of the financial and informational obstacles that Latina high school students in Georgia faced when trying to transition to college:

> I feel that not having someone who knew about college in my family affected me. I had no one to help me fill in applications or who could help me make informed decisions. Also, I felt like the school didn't pressure students to take the SAT or ACT which you had to have for your college application as well as for any scholarship applications.
>
> I didn't know where I would get the money from. Even though my siblings went to college they didn't know what advice to give me because they, themselves had to figure it out on their own…My high school began telling me about possible colleges I could attend during my senior year, and it felt as if they were just informing me to get it off a check list. As I think back to high school, I feel like, unlike the gifted student or high achievers, many of my classmates were not told what classes we had to take in order to attend college.
>
> The biggest obstacle was financial support. Also, I wasn't as heavily informed about college as I am now. It is something that the Latino community would love to see more, but does not understand the process.
>
> I didn't have a car until one month before college and I was worried I wouldn't have any transportation, I also wasn't as informed about college as my classmates because my parents didn't go to college and didn't have as much information to give me as the parents of my classmates who were college graduates. I almost didn't get the opportunity to apply for financial aid also because of lack of information. I just felt like I was blindly going towards a path that no one in my family had ever been through and everyone else had grandparents, aunts, uncles, big sisters, big brothers to tell them how to prepare for college. All I had was the desire to go.

> Some of the obstacles that could have kept me from attending college could include family income, lack of knowledge in preparation, no guidance. These among other personal struggles one may face as a Latino with immigrant parents in this country.

In their accounts of information-related obstacles Latinas expressed that they had "no guidance" and had to figure the process out on their own. As addressed in one of the above responses, one Latina felt as though she was "blindly going towards a path that no one in my family had ever been through." Some Latinas expressed feeling neglected by their schools or guidance counselors for not providing them with the support or information that they needed in order to prepare college and scholarship applications.

Summary of Obstacles to Transition

The most frequently cited obstacle to Latinas transitioning to higher education was the lack of financial resources. Latina survey participants expressed that the lack of financial resources as a major factor that determined whether they would be able to attend college and the decision to do so often placed financial stress on the entire family system. The lack of financial resources was exacerbated by the lack of information and citizenship issues. Furthermore, Latina survey participants were minorities in their high schools and classrooms. Most Latinas never or rarely experienced racial discrimination at their high schools. Issues related to racial discrimination as obstacles were not frequently reported.

Summary of Survey Results

Research Question 1

What are Latina students' experiences in transitioning from high school to higher education?

Based upon survey findings, the transition experience for Latina survey participants was not easy. Despite the majority of participants taking AP/PreAP courses, the two main barriers to their college access were the lack of financial resources and the lack of information about the college admissions requirements and financial aid. These two barriers were often connected because the lack of information was usually connected to not knowing about financial aid resources or how to apply for it. The majority of them also lacked information about what to expect from the college admissions process and how to navigate the process. Overall, the transition experience for Latinas is a journey in which they were not provided with all of the resources to make.

Most Latina survey participants did not have adequate help with making their transition, but sought out most of their information on their own using the internet. The internet was their top source for college admission requirements. Parents and friends were the most consistent source of help and encouragement for Latinas, but they were not as knowledgeable as institutional agents.

The barriers to Latina participants' college access were school-based due to being unable to receive adequate help from counselors and teachers. Counselors and teachers, who had the most information provided the least assistance and were the least dependable in the transition process when compared to parents/guardians and friends. Latinas

received a great deal of encouragement to go to college, but they were provided with very little information and individual assistance to get there.

Regardless of the school demographics, the survey shows that most Latinas were treated fairly by their counselors and teachers and very few were discriminated against by them. On the contrary, other Latina/o students at the high schools of the survey participants were perceived as not being treated as fairly by these institutional agents. Slightly over half of Latinas had to assimilate in order to successfully navigate through high school, which could be due to slightly more than half of participants reporting that other students discriminated against them based upon their race. Latinas who experienced racial discrimination were either encouraged to attend college by the experience or their desire was unaffected.

Research Question 2

What forms of social and cultural capital did Latina students use to help them transition from high school to higher education?

Latina participants used multiple forms of social and cultural capital in order to gain the information, support, and assistance that they needed to transition from high school to higher education. Home and school were the two worlds in which Latinas were provided with encouragement, information, and support to transition to higher education. Parents/guardians were the key form of cultural capital at home while teachers were the key form of social capital at school. Friends were a very helpful form of cultural capital that crossed the boundaries of home and school. Regardless of the setting, cultural capital had the most far-reaching impact on Latina participants transitioning from high school to higher education.

Parents/guardians as a form of cultural capital were most frequently selected as "most helpful with the application process" and "especially helpful" with their transition to college. The majority of their parents/guardians highly valued education and encouraged college attendance despite most of them having less than a college education. Participants most frequently expressed that their parents/guardians encouraged them and supported them in whatever way that they could in order to help transition from high school to higher education. They also gained assistance from their siblings who were more frequently selected as "especially helpful" than their high school counselors.

However, the friends of Latina survey participants also aspired to attend college, which was a source of encouragement. The majority of participants' friends also attended college and half of them attended the same college as the survey participants. The friendship exemplified through open and closed-ended survey items indicated that there was a sense of comradery between Latinas and their friends. Latinas who directly referenced their friends in open-response items indicated that they helped each other, provided encouragement and moral support, and kept each other informed about scholarships, deadlines, and other college information.

Cultural capital played a major role in helping Latina participants transition from high school to higher education. High aspirations and perseverance were forms of cultural capital that enabled Latina participants to overcome barriers that would have otherwise impeded access to higher education. Latinas demonstrated high aspirations for college and attaining graduate degrees. They demonstrated perseverance by seeking out college information using internet resources and contacting colleges.

The collective findings reveal that having at least one supportive school agent and one supportive home agent was important for Latinas to make a successful transition from high school to higher education. The data from the surveys and focus groups indicated that most respondents did not have every level of service or support that they needed, but they managed to get the help needed through the support of at least two individuals; parents, friends, siblings, teachers, or counselors. On average, most Latina participants utilized at least two forms of support to help them transition from high school to higher education.

Research Question 3

What are the perceived best practices for transitioning Latina high school students into institutions of higher education?

The best practices for helping Latina high school students transition from high school to higher education were based on what Latina survey participants indicated would have helped them make a smoother transition as well as services that they found to be most helpful. Survey findings indicated that Latina participants needed more information about financial aid and scholarships, help preparing the FAFSA and other financial aid paperwork, help preparing for SAT/ACT, more information about college requirements, college visits, and more information about admission exams.

These findings are consistent with repeated survey responses concerning obstacles that could have prevented college attendance. Latinas expressed that they faced obstacles that were related to a financial aid, information, and admission exams. These obstacles could have been resolved by the services and supports that Latinas indicated would have helped them make a smoother transition because they were directly related. These best

practices were validated by Latinas' responses addressing the obstacles that they faced trying to get into college.

The best practices that Latina participants indirectly expressed were providing information about college admission requirements and financial aid, assistance navigating the transition process and completing paperwork, providing individual time, and encouragement. Ultimately human supports found most helpful involved a connection or relationship. Based upon the open responses of 363 survey respondents, parents/guardians, friends, teachers, and counselors were indicated as most helpful supports for Latinas getting into college. One interesting finding was that very few Latina participants had mentor support (refer to Table 25), and this was addressed as an area of need by 28.9% of participants. Providing mentor support would help meet the informational and individual assistance needs of Latinas.

Participants who received individual assistance with on-going support considered this most helpful and provided information about what type of service was provided and who provided the service which is quite notable. These results indicated that Latinas benefited best from supports that were on-going or long-term and provided individual assistance with patience and kindness. Relationship was shown to be very important for Latinas. Therefore, providing support and assistance to Latinas in their specified areas of need would be considered best practices.

Focus Group Findings

This section begins with a brief overview of the qualitative phase to include the purpose and the focus group questions that guided this phase of the study. The review of the results will begin with the demographic data for the sample followed by a qualitative

analysis of the two focus groups. The findings from the focus groups will be discussed and an observation of the focus groups will follow.

In Phase II of the sequential explanatory mixed methods study, the researcher conducted two focus group interviews. The focus groups were conducted to explain findings from the online survey and to gain a better understanding of the transition experience for Latinas from high school to higher education. Two separate focus groups were conducted in October 2015. The first focus group was conducted on the campus of Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) and the second focus group was conducted at Valdosta State University (VSU).

Demographics of Focus Group Participants

The ages of the focus group participants ranged from 18 to 20. As shown in

Table Table 37, half of the participants were age 18 with 83.3% of them being born in the U.S. All focus participants attended public high schools in Georgia. Two-thirds (66.7%) of participants graduated in 2015 and were the first in their families to attend college. All participants received the Pell Grant to first attend college. The vast majority (91.7%) of participants received the Georgia HOPE Scholarship and two-thirds (66.7%) received "other scholarships" (see Table 37). A smaller percentage of participants reported that they relied on parents/family (25%) or student loans (16.7%). The ABAC focus group consisted of nine Latina undergraduate students. Seven participants were freshmen and one was a junior. The VSU focus group consisted of four focus group participants with two juniors, one sophomore, and one freshman.

Table 37

Demographics of Focus Group Participants

Demographic Category	Groups	Percentage	N
Age	18 years	50.0%	6
	19 years	16.7%	2
	20 years	33.3%	4
Place of Birth	United States	83.3%	10
	Mexico	8.3%	1
	Central America	8.3%	1
Type of High School Attended	Public	100%	12
High School Graduation Year	2015	66.7%	8
	2013	33.3%	4
First in Family to Attend College	Yes	66.7%	8
	No	33.3%	4
College Status	Freshman	66.7%	8
	Sophomore	8.3%	1
	Junior	25.0%	3
Financial Aid Received	Pell Grant	100%	12
	Georgia HOPE Scholarship	91.7%	11
	Other Scholarships	66.7%	8
	Parents/Family	25.0%	3
	Student Loans	16.7%	2

The demographics of the focus group participants are similar to the survey participants in reference to their age, place of birth, and type of high school attended. The focus group participants have a higher representation of first-generation college students than the survey.

Focus Group Questions

1) What is one word that comes to mind when you think about what you experienced trying to get into college? How does this word describe your experiences?

2) Coming third to searching the internet, counselors were identified as the most informational school agent on college admission requirements (third to you searching for info yourself and the internet), but was indicated as the fifth most helpful person with the application process. In the survey, at the school level, counselors were the most frequently selected as a source of college information and requirements, but only about 40% of Latinas indicated receiving individualized college information from them.

Question: Do these results describe your high school counselor experience? Could you shed some light on this finding or explain this?

3) Teachers At the high school level, teachers were more frequently selected as helpful with admission to college or especially helpful for getting into college. In general, they came second to parents, friends, or brothers/sisters in the help department. Some Latinas in the survey would mention at least one teacher who really helped them.

Question: How do these findings compare with your teacher experience during high school?

4) The majority of (85% and higher) Latinas in the survey indicated that their parents/guardians stressed the importance of hard work (97.0%), getting a good education

(95.4%), *respeto* (92.6%), and doing better than they have (89%). Over 85% of Latinas across the state indicated that the stories that their parents told about their own lives and those of ancestors encouraged them to attend college.

Question: Could you please explain how the values taught by your parents and the stories that they told impacted your desire and determination to attend college?

5) In your opinion and based on your experiences, if you could send a message to the whole world about what Latina high school students need and when they need it in order to go to college, what would you say?

Transition Experience

The Lone Journey

Focus group participants were asked to think back to high school and share one word that came to mind when thinking about what they experienced trying to get into college. The one word descriptions of each Latina's transition experience could be best categorized as difficult due to not having adequate help. Table 38 displays each participant's one word description.

Table 38

Focus Group One-Word Descriptions of High School to College Transition Experience

One-Word Descriptions			
Acceptance	Curious	Independence	Obstacles
Challenging	Difficult	Money	Overwhelming
Confusing	Frustrating	No Help	Scary

The majority of participants had no help transitioning from high school to college and found the process very challenging. The following statements are the explanations that focus group participants provided for selecting the word that described their transition:

> I say "no help" because I'm like the first child in my house to go to college and I mean I have no experience. So I had nobody to help to choose the right college and I mean I'm undecided so I don't know what my main major is so I just like yeah. I'm attending college but I'm like, I don't know…I'm just taking classes.
>
> Difficult because while doing it you have to take all this stuff and you have no help from anyone. Your counselors, you're asking what scholarships can I get…and they're like…well you're Hispanic, you'll get like a good bit, but they don't help you after that. They're like venture off little birdy, and I have some family members that attended college, but it wasn't help at all... There's like no one there to help you really.
>
> I chose overwhelming because I am the first to go the college out of my family. I didn't have anybody to help me…I had AP classes to take and I was trying to get Zell Miller, but I fell short on several points for my SAT so I had a lots of classes and homework to take care of and then I was trying to take care of my family at the same time. So it was just a lot.
>
> My experience was frustrating because of the reasons for Haley Rae. Uh, similar difficulties were that I wasn't aware of what I was getting into or what resources were available to me because also my parents weren't aware so I had to investigate myself when I felt that they should help me since they've helped me all my life.
>
> I chose confusing because I'm the first in my family to go so I don't know which classes are good, which classes are bad. I didn't know which classes I should take. Like, if I can pay the tuition or not.
>
> I chose independence because even though I have an older brother I really wasn't able to depend on anybody to help me choose the career I want or help me with scholarships or help me apply for college. It was all just like a struggle I had to face on my own.
>
> It was challenging because you actually have to apply to college. It's not like high school where you just automatically go into it, so it's challenging because if you're not the type of person to go out and actually search up colleges then you're never gonna go. You know. You have to search into college and then apply to them. Then see what all you need for them to get in.

Most of the focus group participants were first generation college students who were traveling the road to college alone. Regardless of their one word descriptions, focus group participants consistently explained that they did not have the assistance or information that they needed to make the decisions needed to go to college. Participants

echoed a lack of information about the college process, financial aid, scholarships, and the cost of college. As expressed by one participant, "Curious, because I'm the first in my family to go to college, so I didn't have the backbone or the support to lead me the right way on applying for college…what type of financial aid is available…"

The descriptions of most participants' difficult transition experiences were the result of lacking information about how to pay for college. Many participants reported that they were unaware of the sources of financial aid and scholarships that were available to them. Some participants expressed that they did not know how much college would cost. Mia's comment was representative of most participants. Her comments were as follows:

> I chose money because I really don't know the kinds of scholarships that were out there until I was already about to graduate; and it was already too late to apply to those; and I only got HOPE and Pell and that didn't really cover everything; and my parents also had to pay my sister's college so I was scared that money wouldn't be enough to pay for my college and her college also.

This participant did not find out about scholarships for which she was eligible until it was too late. Her situation was also an indicator that she did not have anyone to inform her about scholarships.

> Um obstacles, because I am only half Hispanic so my whole life I was taught to mark White on the little biography thing and I had to make a decision whether to go into college and…and would I be able to get those scholarships for Hispanics? Or do I want to just pick White and continue with it? So I had to like choose an identity basically.

> I chose scary (laughs; some group members giggle) because I knew that I was going to be put in a place that I wasn't familiar with and there were going to be a lot of people surrounding me and I would have to break out of my shell to get to know people. And I was a little scared of like, failing.

Based upon the responses of most focus group participants, they typically had no help trying to get into college which resulted in a lack of information about the college admissions process and the availability of financial aid.

There was one outlier in the focus groups, in which there was no concern about information or money. One participant expressed that being accepted by her peers in college defined her transition experience. She was a third generation college student, and the ability to finance college was not an issue for her.

> Jessica: I chose acceptance because uh, for me it wasn't like financial. It was partly but I wanted to feel accepted in college like I was in high school. In high school you don't go to school with a lot of people so they accept you for who you are. Then you go to college and it's like a huge experience, so like you want to be accepted by everybody, so that's why I chose acceptance.

Jessica's transition experience was unlike any other participants' and she even recognized how different it was.

Comparison to survey results. The transition experience of Latina focus group participants was difficult due to the barriers that they had to overcome in order to transition from high school to higher education. Latinas' struggle to overcome barriers related to their lack of information about the college admissions process and financial aid supported survey results indicating the same barriers. Unlike the survey participants, the focus group participants were mostly first generation college students, but their transition experiences could be characterized in the same manner – difficult and full of barriers. The focus group participants' explanation of how they had no help or guidance in the process supported survey findings indicating the same, which provided even more support for why the majority of Latina survey participants sought out information on their own using the internet. One focus group participant even stated that "…if you're not the

type of person to go out and actually search up colleges then you're never gonna go." Focus group participants mirrored the survey participants' concerns over the lack of financial resources to pay for college and the lack of information about financial aid. Both the focus groups and survey support the finding that the Latina transition experience is difficult due to the lack of financial resources, lack of information about the college admissions process and financial aid, and the lack of assistance in the process.

Role of the High School Counselor

Counselor Was Never There

In order to gain insight on the role of counselors in transitioning Latina students from high school to higher education, focus group participants were asked about their high school counselor's role in helping them transition to higher education. The theme that evolved from their responses and discussion was that *my counselor was never there*. Latina focus group participants gave repeated accounts of how their high school counselors failed to provide the information and assistance that they needed in order to get to college. Very few focus group participants reported that their counselors had been beneficial for helping them get into college.

The pattern of interactions between Latinas and their counselors seemed to be one of inconvenience on behalf of the counselor and struggle on behalf of Latinas. Focus group participants shared experiences in which their counselor was unavailable to them, deferred them to other resources, or was simply unhelpful and uninformative. Addison shared her counselor experience saying:

> For my guidance counselor she was hardly ever in her office and when I did manage to meet with her once, she basically told me to look up all the stuff online. I knew that I could rely more on my teachers than I could on my guidance counselor.

Addison's experience with her counselor led her to the conclusion that counselors were unreliable for providing the help that she needed. Veronica also shared a similar experience in which her counselor was unavailable, unfriendly, and provided mass information in the form of handouts without the opportunity for individual assistance. Veronica stated:

> …Our counselor…I would try often to go to his office and stuff, but he was mostly never there; and when he was there he was kind of…honestly, he was kind of rude. He would just be like, "Well, I'll eventually pass out all of the scholarships." Then when he did pass out the papers for us to know and everything; he passed them out during lunch time, which was like you really don't get to have contact with him and tell him 'what are the necessary things for that?' You just had to read it and everything and if we had a question you were lucky if you found him in the office, but if not, then you just had to do it how you can.

Veronica's experience was discouraging and she was left to her own means to figure out the scholarship process. Scholarship information in the form of papers did not provide all of the help that Veronica needed. She made it very clear that the timing of the scholarship information distribution prohibited her from being able to speak with her counselor individually and ask questions.

Another participant had a counselor experience similar to Veronica's. Maria's counselor experience provided another example of what it was like to repeatedly seek out information or assistance and never receive it. She described her transition experience as "difficult" and her experiences provide evidence of this. It seemed that every request that she made to her counselor was met with a new challenge to receive the information that she was seeking. Maria's experience was an extreme example of institutional abuse by a counselor due to his outright failure to assist her. Maria expressed the following:

> …Applying for FAFSA; that was the worst. That was a nightmare, 'cause I was like, I need your help here. I remember he once did…I hate to say this (quietly). He did a White girl's entire FAFSA for her. She was right next to me. He did it

> for her and I was like, can you help me, and he was like, "I'll help you" and he sat me down and said, "Start doing this." And I remember the girl told me, "He did my entire FAFSA for me." …and he didn't even sit by me and help me through it step-by-step. He just disappeared …and I'm like, can you help me? He's like, "I'll be there in a second." And then I'll have to sit there waiting and even…actually students helped me more with my FAFSA than the counselor did.

This participant even indicated that she had to force her counselor to help her. The consensus among focus group participants was that the FAFSA, financial aid, and scholarships were areas in which they needed the most assistance. Maria's counselor failed to provide individual assistance to her on more than one occasion, and he never did help her with fill the FAFSA. Like Veronica, Maria seemed hesitant about insinuating that her counselor was discriminating against her based upon her race/ethnicity by helping the "White girl" and not helping her.

The counselor practice of providing information without individual assistance was a common issue among other focus group participants. A few focus group participants expressed that their counselors held meetings with their entire graduating class. These meetings were typically held in the late spring of their junior, in the fall of their senior year, or both. Haley Rae stated, "It was like during the last nine weeks of the junior year that they were like you, upcoming seniors there's a meeting or whatever and it was like a packet of stuff that was coming up for senior year." One participant shared that her school's counselors tried to have a one-on-one meeting with all students and that they also had parent meetings, but her account of these experiences indicated that these meetings were more of a routine formality rather than being truly helpful.

During high school, college information was most commonly provided to focus group participants through senior class meetings during the school day and mass communications, such as posters on the wall, information scrolling on school TV screens,

and information packets. The problem was that no individual guidance was provided by counselors to help them understand the information or assist with related issues. The consensus of the group as expressed by Haley Rae was that, "Resources were given, but the attention and time wasn't at all." Participants shared the belief that counselors did not care enough about them to provide the time and attention necessary to address their needs.

Latina participants provided repeated responses indicating that they needed individual time with their counselors, but their "counselors were never there." Despite the mass communications present at some schools, assistance with scholarship information and financial aid information was not provided. Based upon their responses, participants mainly visited their counselors to request information or assistance related to scholarships or financial aid.

Focus group participants at the university were very vocal about the quality of their high school counselors. "…They were really looked down on because all they did was eat…and run the meetings whenever you'd have a meeting as a whole school…," stated one participant. Some participants talked about how their counselor would not know their name if they went back to visit their perspective high schools. The consensus among participants that counselors were ineffective for helping them get into college was reflected by one participant stating, "I'm not even sure why we paid to have a counselor because they were never there."

Only one focus group participant reported having a counselor that was helpful. Unlike other focus group participants, Mia was able to rely on her counselor for

information, encouragement, and assistance. Mia described her counselor experience in the following statement:

> The biggest help for me was my counselor. Actually, like me and her would spend like a lot of time in my tenth grade year when I went to see her for the dual enrollment program and she told me it doesn't matter if you have questions live every 10 seconds come and ask me. So I'd probably spend most of my day in the counselor's office after my classes to go ask questions and stuff. She like encouraged me and some of my friends that could come and she would encourage us to do better and stuff. She even invited us to go eat after graduation but we couldn't because we had to go to work afterwards. So, she was like my biggest help.

Mia's counselor provided time and attention to helping her, which was unlike the experiences of the other participants. Her counselor established a caring relationship with her that extended past tenth grade. The counselor made Mia feel comfortable and welcome to ask her questions by being available. Not only did she help Mia, but she also helped Mia's friends.

As the key institutional agent for providing college information, counselors seemed to be disconnected from Latina high school students during their transition process. Despite counselors being reported as having mass junior and senior meetings to provide general college information and reminders about deadlines, very few focus group participants reported that their counselors had been beneficial for helping them get into college. As described by many Latina participants, experiences with their high school counselors were characterized as unhelpful and their "counselors were never there;" at least not for them.

Comparison to survey results. The focus group findings were consistent with the online survey results that showed that counselors were the most knowledgeable about the college-going process, but were not very beneficial for helping them get into college.

Focus group participants specifically addressed that counselors provided scholarship information and other resources, which was one of the most frequently provided counselor services as reported by survey participants. The theme of "my counselor was never there" explained why 58.6 % (294) of survey participants never received one-on-one individualized college information from their guidance counselors. The focus group findings explained why high school counselors were consistently reported as the fifth most helpful with the college application process and fifth for being "especially helpful" for getting into college. Both survey and focus group participants acknowledged that their guidance counselors were the gatekeepers of valuable college information, but they were unavailable to them for providing individual assistance. According to 59.8% of survey participants, counselors encouraged them to attend a 4-year university, but this encouragement was likely received through the mass meetings that counselors held to disseminate college information as reported by focus group participants. The focus group findings clearly support the survey results showing that counselors provided limited assistance, and as a result were not very helpful to Latina participants for making the transition from high school to higher education.

Role of Teachers

Teachers Provided Encouragement and Information

Findings from the online survey indicated that teachers were considered to be the most helpful school agent for helping Latina high students get into college. Some online survey participants referenced a particular teacher who was very helpful to them during the transition process. In order to better understand this phenomenon, focus group

participants were asked about whether they also had a teacher in high school that was helpful to them getting into college and how they help them.

Most focus group participants agreed that they had a high school teacher who helped them in some way to get into college. The teachers show helped them were not isolated to academic subject areas, but also represented courses such as ROTC, band, and career and technical education (CTAE) courses. Luna immediately shared, "I had a business teacher and she helped me fill out my FAFSA, my application, and my scholarship." Jessica then shared that she had help from many of her teachers, and she was grateful for this. Jessica stated,

> I feel like I was super fortunate because I had a ton of help to get into college. Like, so much like the support. Like, hey you can do this. Like counselors, you really don't get to really spend time with, but your teachers they're one-on-one with you and they get to see how you act. Like, they get to see every aspect of you in the classroom. I feel like I was super lucky because I had a lot of my teachers that would always encourage me and helped me with whatever I needed and answered all of my questions, and I think another part of…is that since your teachers actually get to spend time with you. Like they're the people that write your recommendation letters whenever you're getting into college, but it's super important to have that and I feel like I was very fortunate because a lot of my teachers spent a lot of time with me.

Jessica's experience was different from many participants because she had multiple teachers that assisted her. Most participants in the survey had only one teacher that was helpful to them, so Jessica's situation would have been outside of the norm. Jessica clearly indicated that her teachers encouraged her, answered her questions, and most importantly they spent time with her. She emphasized that the time spent with students was what separated teachers from counselors while revealing that she truly valued the time that her teachers spent helping her.

Jessica was the only focus group participant that had multiple teachers helping her, but other participants also shared how a special teacher set aside the time to help them get to college. Addison provided an account of how her ROTC instructor had helped her a lot. Addison stated:

> My person who helped me the most was my ROTC instructor. He...I've been with him since ninth grade so he seen me all four years and he helped me do a lot of volunteer work. He (cough) sorry….and personally, we grew close together. So we had that one-on-one relationship and he helped me do volunteer work. He wrote a lot of recommendation letters for me. And he even helped me apply to several colleges and scholarships. He… whenever I would slack off on something he would push me to do more.

Addison's account of her teacher experience involved a relationship of caring in which the ROTC instructor provided his time to help her be successful. Though Addison did not mention encouragement, all of the activities that her ROTC instructor assisted her with were related to college and scholarship applications. This ROTC instructor was not involved at just one level of Addison's transition, but provided several forms of assistance. This instructor invested his time into helping her reach her goals.

Like Addison, Allison was also able to develop a close relationship with her Spanish teacher over several years. Allison shared the following:

> I had….my Spanish professor actually and I had her for several years, so I was able to develop that relationship with her and I felt like it was also my doing and I felt comfortable talking to her about this and opening up to her about my personal experience with college or what I was dealing with at the moment and then she was able to help me with a lot of the stuff that I needed to get into college.

Teacher-student relationships like those referenced by Addison and Allison were significant because they developed over years of interaction and existed prior to the need for assistance with going to college. Though not directly mentioned, trust played a major

role in the relationships that existed between Latina students and their teachers. Trust allowed the participants to be able to rely on their teachers for information and assistance.

All Latina participants did not express having a close relationship with their teachers, but yet they received information or encouragement from them. Most of the participants did not receive individual assistance but were provided with guidance and information during their classes, which was valued by them. Maria's support from two different teachers characterizes the varying relationships that helpful teachers had with Latina participants and the different types of assistance that they provided:

> Mine was my broadcast and video teacher and my nursing teacher. My broadcast and video teacher; she was…the one that pushed me the most …she was the one that always reminded me that you have to do this, you have to do this, don't forget to do that. She was there for me. She was actually more of a friend and she's a lot better counselor than my actual counselor. And then my nursing teacher, she was the one that would remind me….like…you know you need these grades. They were both very helpful for it…like my nursing teacher had speakers talking about the nursing program that we could go to if we wanted to and they were very helpful.

Some participants even specified that teachers who were helpful to them provided guidance on careers, provided reminders about important dates, speakers, or provided opportunities to prepare college paperwork. The help provided by each teacher was very different, but regardless of the type, each participant was grateful that it had been extended to them.

Veronica provided an example of how teachers disseminated college information and facilitated career development for an entire class. Her teacher was helpful to her but there was a limitation to how much help she would receive.

> I feel like the teachers were really helpful 'cause my science honors teacher…she would constantly, like all of her students. We had her all four years, so she would constantly check on our careers and she would tell us like what careers would be best for us or tell us how much we would get paid; the benefits of each one. She

> would constantly be there for us even though like Angela said, we wouldn't always get to get all the help but… because there's obviously things we have to do by ourselves. I had to do all that by myself also, but the teachers were…..well at least Ms. Simmons, she was always there; constantly.

Though teachers were helpful, participants felt that there was a limit to the level of help that they would provide. As reiterated by Veronica, the reality was that all teachers were not helpful. Angela shared her experience of only receiving encouragement:

> I would say yes, that the teachers were encouraging but I would say that I filled out all the papers by myself. Like, I didn't get no help with the FAFSA or the college applications; like getting papers ready for that by myself with no help. So, I had…yes, I had teachers tell me you're a smart girl and you can do this, but I had no help with the papers. I was like "oh my God" how you do this and then I did it by myself. I don't know how, but I did it and I'm here.

Encouragement without individual assistance is what Angela mainly received from her teachers. When speaking with her further she had sought out individual help from a teacher, but did not receive it. She resolved that she "didn't want to bother them" so she just did it herself. Emphasis on the difficulty that she experienced with the FAFSA and college applications indicated that these were tasks that she needed the most assistance with, but never received.

Participants even shared that they received help from teachers who they would not have expected help from. Adeline spoke of how her automotive teacher was a mentor to her. He also provided speakers and provided career guidance. Haley Rae's band director reserved Thursdays and Fridays for "senior sit-downs" to allow them to use the computer to apply to colleges, complete paperwork, or do anything necessary to complete college admissions requirements.

Nine out of 13 focus group participants were first generation college students who were grateful to receive any form of help that was provided by their teachers. The

participants' declaration that a teacher provided assistance that helped them get to college did not mean that college admissions information, financial aid information, or individual assistance with paperwork was provided. The focus group participants especially valued teachers or any form of support that provided encouragement, time, and attention to helping them reach their goal of college attendance.

Based upon the experiences of Latina focus group participants, the pattern of teacher support was that of one who encouraged college attendance, supported the development of career aspirations, and facilitated access to college resources. Additionally, especially helpful teachers had close relationships with Latina participants and provided various types of assistance that included one-on-one help with the things that they needed most. Teachers were good for helping some Latinas and not others. The reality is that sometimes the help that these Latina participants needed the most as high school students was not necessarily the help that they received from teachers or counselors.

Comparison to survey results. The focus group findings are consistent with survey results indicating that teachers encouraged college attendance and provided college information to Latina study participants. Survey results indicated that teachers were more encouraging than counselors and were reported to be the most helpful school agent. The focus group explained that teachers were more encouraging and helpful with the transition process because they provided more time and individual assistance than counselors. Furthermore, it provided more insight on why some Latina survey participants mentioned one teacher who was especially helpful to them getting into

college. As expressed by some focus group participants, these special teachers formed a connection or bond with them.

The reality is that every study participant did not have a teacher that was "special." "You don't always get all the help" was stated by one focus group participant, which indicated that teachers also provided limited assistance. This finding provided understanding on survey results showing teachers were consistently reported as the third most helpful individual with the application process and for helpfulness for getting into college.

Role of Parents, Values, and Stories of Struggle

Latina focus group participants were strongly impacted by the values that their parents taught them and the stories that they told. In the words of Addison, "Your parents are your prime motivation inspiration…regardless of school or not." The parents of the focus group participants consistently emphasized and taught the importance of hard work, perseverance, getting a good education, and doing better than they had done in life. Regardless of most parents having very little information about college, they inspired and encouraged their daughters to attend college.

Inspired by Parents' Struggles

All of the focus group participants' parents were immigrants who shared a story of struggle and sacrifice in coming to the U.S., because many of their parents immigrated as teenagers or younger. Most parents had to sacrifice their own education and dreams as youth in order to take care of younger siblings or other family members. For many participants the struggle continued for their parents as they worked in occupations requiring hard labor in order to provide for their families. As a result, many participants

talked about their parents' health failing. Addison shared comments that are representative of many other participants:

> And this summer was actually the first time I ever went to go work in the fields and it was dreadful. (Group members sniffling) And I looked around and saw how hard my mom was working and how hard my dad had been working too. And just to see them...I used to see them come home and they'd be alive and well. Now they're just...you know …they're wearing away. And she's just telling me how she doesn't want this for me anymore. That I need to get outta here…and the only way to do that is through college.

Most focus group participants were eager to share the stories of their parents' struggles and sacrifices and how they inspired them to attend college and become someone in life. The emotion evoked by the thought of their parents' struggles and sacrifices superseded every other source of support discussed in the focus group.

Many participants expressed gratefulness and indebtedness for their parents' sacrifice and struggle. They had a genuine desire to give back what had been given to them by their parents. Their parents lived the values that they taught, and they were determined to live those values and become "someone in life." Sophia recounted receiving a scholarship from her mother's job and how this was a way to thank her parents for their hard work. Sophia's expression of gratitude was just one example of many shared during the focus.

> …They've always tried to provide us with the best. The best that they could…and…they always taught me that in order to get something I had to work hard for it. So it was like…..when I was 16, I started working…during the summer… to try to help them out with…like…the upcoming school year…(crying and talking) like being able to buy my clothes…and like helping them out at least a little bit. So, I think for me…I noticed their hard work and I wanted to help them as much as I could. And I think coming to college and working hard here and getting a degree is going to like put me in the place where I can provide what they need for them ….so that they won't have to work as hard…and…so that they can take a break every now and then.

Sophia's dedication to helping make her parents' lives better and thanking them is a result of the values that her parents lived and instilled in her. Addison shared similar feelings:

> The only time I ever really truly see them happy where it lights up in their eyes is either one, when we say that we love them or two, whenever we do good in school. So, I've always tried to do good in school. Every honor roll that I got…every award that I got….I would look up at them and I would see them so happy…and that just inspired me… I got honor roll all four years. That was my way of saying "thank you and I love you" to them…getting good grades and being somebody. And whenever I graduated...I graduated with honors…and they were just…I can't even describe how happy they were (smiling).

Like Sophia and Addison, many participants used academic achievements and attending college in pursuit of a degree as ways to thank their parents. Getting a good education by going to college did not just benefit the Latina participants and their parents, but it benefited their entire family for generations. The participants made it their responsibility to continue their education and attain degrees so that they could help their parents and families. Ultimately, they all wanted to make their parents proud of them while giving something back.

Comparison to survey results. The focus group finding supported and explained why 87.1% (406) of survey participants reported that stories (*consejos*) of parental or family struggle encouraged them to attend college. Focus group participants provided rich descriptions of their parents' hard work, sacrifice, and struggle and how it inspired them do better in life by getting a college education. This focus group finding validates survey items Q63 and Q65 concerning family and parental stories of struggle. *Consejos* encouraged Latina study participants to attend college.

Parents Encouraged and Supported College Attendance

The parents of participants valued education and encouraged their daughters to get a college education and forfeit the hard labor and suffering that they had endured or were still experiencing. Though most parents had very little knowledge about college, the survey showed that they were considered to be most helpful with the application process. When focus group participants were asked to explain how their parents were most helpful with the application process they explained that their parents tried to help them in whatever way that they could. Veronica provided an example:

> When I was first filling out my papers and stuff, even though my mom doesn't read really like…she can read English a little bit and she understands it a little bit and my dad does too, but they would ask me okay…what are the papers that you're going to need?....like do you need your passport?...do you need your ID?...do you need this?" It's not necessarily because they can read what we are doing but it's like they're checking on us…making sure that if there's anything they can do…they can at least make it a little bit easier for us. Like, be there for support just so that we can be closer to success than away.

Veronica's account of how her parents assisted showed how parental support for going to college, no matter how great or small, was significant to participants. Maria shared her father's encouraging words,

> But he would always remind me, "You are smart, you have great potential and you're legal, so you should go forward with what you have; and he would always remind me how smart I am and how I should go with education…and like we got you"; and I always remember how they would work…like crazy to help me with school. And 'til this day they do…So I see them work, and I'm in school because of them.

Haley Rae's parents pushed and encouraged her to seize educational opportunities that they never had. Since becoming a college student they have even told her, "You know if we worked out in the sun you can hit the books 'til midnight."

As expressed by focus group participants, their parents' lack of information about college did not prevent them from encouraging college attendance and doing everything possible to help make it happen. The focus group provided insight on what parents/guardians did for their Latina daughters that made them "most helpful" as indicated by the survey results. How parents were most helpful to their Latina daughters attending college was quite clear; they did whatever was necessary to help them.

Comparison to survey results. The focus group findings that Latina/o parents supported and encouraged college attendance supports survey results showing that Latina/o parents highly encouraged their daughters to attend college more than any other source. The focus group's descriptions of parental encouragement for higher education supports the survey's finding that parents/guardians have an extremely high value of education and that they stressed "getting a good education." As addressed by Veronica, her parents had very little knowledge about the college admissions process but they did whatever was needed to help her. This finding provides insight and support for survey results indicating that parents/guardians were the "most helpful" with the college application and the most "especially helpful" for helping Latinas get into college. The focus group findings and the survey results both support the overall finding that parents encouraged and supported college attendance.

Doing Better Than My Parents

Latina/o parents lived the values that they taught. The parents of these participants worked hard, persevered, and set a standard for them. Though many parents had very little education they knew the value of an education and knew that it was the key to a better life for their sons and daughters. As these participants spoke about their

parents there was a glimmer of admiration upon their faces. Angela shared her pride in her father.

> My dad came to the United States…he was 12, I think...and he suffered a lot. For me he's an inspiration because he has accomplished a lot of things without an education. I'm sitting here like going to college. I have more opportunities to do better and like I can accomplish more than what he accomplished already. Like, I'm so proud of him; with all the things he has done. It's like….it means a lot to me.

Veronica also expressed how her parents sparked her desire to be better,

> He's done so much for like, his family. He started off from the fields. He's done almost every single job you could imagine…construction working, everything, but I admire him because he has gained every single dollar he has ever had with honor. You know, he has actually earned it….and I know I owe my mom and dad so much, which is through the values that they teach us and everything. I actually want to become a better person and be somebody in this world. I know that I will never be as great as they are, but I…I hope I can make a change.

These students were very determined to make their parents proud. Overall, they felt like they owed them this because of all that they went through in order to get to the U.S. Many addressed the fact that they were driven to get a degree because they wanted to make their parents' life better and have a better life than their parents did.

Comparison to survey results. The focus group participants' reflection on their parents' struggles and the values that they taught them reflects the impact of *consejos* and cultural values stressed by their parents/guardians. Their inspiration to do better as they reflect on the barriers that their parents had overcome supports survey results showing that *consejos* encouraged Latinas to attend college while their emphasis on the value of "doing better than they have done" supports survey result showing that this value was stress by the parents/guardians of 89% of the survey participants.

Defying Cultural Gender Stereotypes

Focus group participants talked with each other about how their parents encouraged them to be independent women. Allison shared her mother's advice:

> Also to not depend on a man. That was something my mom always told me. You do what you want to do for you because at the end of the day it's only gonna benefit you or hurt you. So, I was always taught to not depend on a man.

Fellow focus group participants gave comments of agreement as she spoke. Participants expressed that some members of their family and older Latinas/os tended to still hold the traditional cultural belief that women should depend on a man, get married, and have children. Haley Rae shared that her grandparents were more progressive in their thinking.

> Oh my goodness. My grandparents, they were just always like, "Don't get married! Don't have kids! 'Cause you know people always talk about you." And I was like, "They're gonna talk about me in a good way now, because I don't have kids." (Group sniggles.)

Participants also discussed how proud their parents were to be able to say that they did not have children and that they were in college working on a degree. Focus group participants expressed that their parents had empowered them to be highly educated independent women, which defied traditional practices of the Latina/o culture.

Some participants expressed the desire to be role models for other Latinas in their families; showing them that they too could achieve great things in life. Maria stated,

> …I'm the only female in my family to even start going to college and I have lots of younger family members who were born here in America and I want to show them that you don't have to get pregnant at a young age and get married and just…work a crap job…you can go to college and have a beautiful life.

Maria and other focus group participants were forerunners in their families. This focus group finding provided insight on how traditional Latina/o beliefs and ideas have shifted within some Latina/o families.

Comparison to survey results. This focus group finding was revealed through discussion between participants during the focus group. The researcher did not pose a question about cultural gender stereotypes. However, this finding supports survey finding that both parents/guardians discouraged their daughters from getting married and starting a family. Haley Rae's grandparents' encouragement not to marry and not to have kids and the proudness of her parents that she was in college getting a degree also supports survey results indicating that parents/guardians highly stressed getting a good education and living higher quality of life with high moral values. There is an unspoken acknowledgement that a higher quality of life cannot be achieved if a good education through college attendance is not acquired prior to getting married and starting a family. This provided further evidence that there is a shift from the traditional Latina/o gender roles and cultural practices.

Resisting Racial Discrimination

Focus group participants shared how their parents taught them to cope with racial discrimination. Adeline shared her mother's racialized experience and the advice she gave:

> She always tells me the story about how when she was growing up she was discriminated against; the names that she was called because she was Hispanic. No one helped her in school. She was an outcast and I still see it today…the discrimination against her; and she always told me, "No, you've gotta move past it. You can't let people tell you that you can't do something. We can do the same things just as well as they can." So…it motivates me. It motivates me to be a better person; to have more than she did.

Maria also shared guidance that she received from her father:

> "You are not White, you're not going to get all these scholarships." So they're like, "You have to work your butt off."

Maria's father informed her that as minority, she was going to have work harder for what she gets in life. Overall, the participants' parents provided guidance that would empower them and not victimize them. As a result of this advice, participants were able to achieve their academic goals and persevere despite facing racial discrimination.

Comparison to survey results. This finding supports and explains why only a few (1.8%, $f = 7$) survey participants were discouraged from attending college as a result of discrimination. The majority of survey participants' desire to attend college was either encouraged (43%, $f = 169$) or unaffected (55.2%, $f = 217$) by experiences of racial discrimination. The focus group findings confirm that the survey results are a direct reflection of the values taught by parents which fostered resistant capital in the study participants.

Experiences of Racial Discrimination and Stereotyping

Racial discrimination was present in the normal high school experiences of Latina focus group participants in both covert and overt forms. Though focus group participants were not asked about racial discrimination, its presence was revealed in various responses. Acts of discrimination trickled over into their transition experiences or those of their Latina/o peers. Focus group participants noted the disparities in scholarships awarded to Latinas/os at their school, underrepresentation in Advanced Placement courses, tracking into the ESOL program, racial stereotyping, and instances of overt racism.

Inequitable Access to Services and Information

Despite graduating from different high schools, the focus group participants expressed experiences of inequitable access to counselor assistance and scholarship information based upon race/ethnicity or privilege. Haley Rae expressed that disseminating information to Latinas/os was not a priority at her school. She stated,

> I feel like in high school, they prioritized those kids who were like White, and they were like privileged, or like their parents were like coaches or teachers or stuff like that; and they left those minorities or those other lower class people behind. They'd be like oh, eventually you'll get the information, but then when you realized it; it was too late to apply for the scholarships…"

Adeline agreed, saying:

> I mean that's like the scholarships. The Whites, the popular; they get the same scholarships over and over and they're like you have the minority scholarships. There's not that many out there and your school doesn't ever tell you about them 'cause you're not a priority.

Maria provided an account of how no Latina/o high school seniors at her school received scholarships at Honor's Day despite the fact that they had high class rankings.

> Yeah, I remember our ceremony. I was sitting there. I was like maybe I'll get one scholarship and every student that got a scholarship was either White or African American. Not one was given to one single Hispanic. There was not one and we were smart. Our second, the third one, and then our class ranking was Hispanic; and she was a teen mom, but yet she did not get one scholarship and she was accepted to some great schools, but not one scholarship went to her.

The lack of Latina/o scholarship recipients despite being top ranking honor graduates could likely be a result of not having information about scholarships and financial aid. Latina/o students could not receive scholarships that they did not know about and could not apply for. As addressed by Latinas in the focus group, scholarship information was disparately provided to Latinas/os at their high school and when it was provided it was too late.

Comparison to survey results. The focus group findings on "inequitable access to college information and resources" did not directly connect with the survey results. The survey did not inquire about whether services were provided equally, but it did inquire about whether survey participants felt that they had been treated fairly. The survey results showed that the majority of participants were treated fairly by both counselors and teachers. However, this focus group finding could be indicative of the covert forms of racism that are consistent with institutional racism. This may explain why Latina participants felt that other Latina/o students at their school were treated less fairly.

Overt Racism

Haley Rae expressed how her AP Calculus teacher repeatedly ignored her raised hand, avoided her, and never answered her questions during class. She went further to share a situation in which this same AP Calculus teacher notified her of missing homework.

> She said, "Oh, I didn't receive one of your homework assignments," and I was like, "Are you sure, because I turned it in?" But the thing is I saw it whenever she was getting her papers and she was restacking them, and I was like, "I think that's mine in there." 'Cause I think I saw my last name, and she pulled it out and she was like, "Oh yeah, this is yours," and she just started going through it and then she just gave me like a "C" on it and I'm like, "Why? You didn't even like check with the answer key to see if it was right." So, yeah, after that one I went in to see the principal."

This teacher was suspended as a result of the same actions with other minority students at Haley Rae's school. Other students at her high school were also familiar with this teacher's tendency to lose homework so that you would receive "bad grades."

Adeline added that, "You learn which teachers discriminate against your minorities and you try to avoid them. It's not spoken. It's unspoken. I mean, you know that if you take their class you're probably not going to get at an 'A'." This statement

was the consensus with everyone in that same focus group. There was recognition of covert forms of racism in their high schools that could have negatively impacted their academic grade point average. In Haley Rae's high school, the principal acknowledged the validity of the complaints against the AP Calculus teacher, but this was not always the case. If this institutional abuse had not been recognized by Haley Rae and then resolved by her principal, her grade in the class would have been below or near failing. Her grade would have indicated that she, as a Latina, was not intelligent enough to take AP Calculus, which would have been false.

Comparison to survey results. The focus group finding of "overt racism" is supported by the survey results in terms of its occurrence. Survey results showed that 55.7% of Latinas indicated that other students racially discriminated against, but few reported having these experiences with teachers and counselors. The intensity of the racial discrimination experienced was not addressed by the survey. However, the focus group confirmed and supported survey results that showed that racial discrimination is present in the high school experience of Latina high school students.

Racial Stereotypes

Jessica indirectly addressed the impact of racial/ethnic stereotypes on society's perception of Latinas' college aspirations.

> I feel like for us, a lot of people have the mindset that we like can't afford college. Like we don't have what is necessary…like resources to go to college, so like we don't even try. I think that's a big problem with our culture…but obviously, we're all here so we all wanted to come to college.

This participant made it very clear that Latinas/os did want to go to college, but the stereotype hindered them. Jessica made no further references to racial stereotypes and no one commented.

Mia expressed the biased view of a teacher in reference to a Latina/o college preparation program that Armstrong State University sponsored on her high school campus.

> The teacher said, "I don't think it's fair that they have a class for just Hispanics because why don't they have a class for just White people or why don't they just have a class for black people to help them with college?" I was like it's harder for us Hispanics or Latinas/os to actually find information…because some families, like none of their members had went to college before so they don't really know what college is about…"

Like Jessica, Mia seemed almost hesitant to address inequality or racism. She was apprehensive about saying "White people," which was very telling. Again, no one commented on her experience or shared their own. Their silence about racial issues, bias, or any form of discrimination indicated that this was a delicate subject for the group. The participants in the focus group seemed as though they did not feel like it was safe or acceptable to discuss the issue.

Comparison to survey results. These findings do not directly relate to any survey questions or findings. The survey did not address racial stereotypes. However, it may provide and explanation for why survey results indicated the presence of racial discrimination in the high school experience, but results indicated that the majority had "never" or "rarely" experienced racial discrimination. This focus group's response led the researcher to believe that Latina survey participants may have been reluctant to address the racial discrimination that they may have faced during high school, which is why findings show that most were discriminated against.

Tracking

VSU focus group participants expressed being wrongly placed in ESOL classes during their schools years but how very few minorities were represented in gifted and AP

courses. They acknowledged that access to advanced course programming was limited to the same students throughout their school years. Adeline expressed the following points:

> In my school we started AP classes or gifted classes freshman year. You know you might already be in a gifted class, but you're in these accelerated classes. However, it's the same people. They don't ever give other minorities a chance to get into those classes.

This practice seemed very common and it maintained the underrepresentation of minorities in AP, gifted programming, accelerated programs, and honors classes. Adeline acknowledged that this practice had persisted in education for a long time. All of the focus group participants had the experience of being minorities in AP and honors courses that were predominately White during high school.

Furthermore, focus group participants felt that Latina/o students are more likely to be placed in ESOL classes or special education programming than they were to be placed into gifted, AP, or honors courses. Tracking Latina/o students into ESOL was practiced throughout Georgia and the U.S., and this practice did not go unnoticed by one Latina focus group participant (Contreras, 2011; U.S. Civil Rights Commission, 1974; Welton & Martinez, 2014). Allison expressed an experience that she called "adult discrimination."

> I have a personal experience with it too, because I feel like adult discrimination in schools is real, because when I was in elementary school they wanted to put me in ESOL; and after they were telling me all this. I didn't know what it was, and when my mom found out she started going more into it; and then after we found out what it was. The people in the office actually needed a translator and they put me there. I was an elementary school student translating for adults who wanted me to be in ESOL at one point.

Allison's account of how her elementary school recommended that she be placed in ESOL, but then had her serve as a translator in the school's office was paradoxical. If she had not been proficient in both English and Spanish she would not have been able to translate for meetings at her elementary school. Placement in ESL would have likely

lowered Allison's chances of ever taking an AP or honors classes during high school, which would have ultimately served as a barrier to reaching higher education. Tracking into ESL has a long-lasting and inhibitory impact on future educational opportunities for Latina/o students (Foxen, 2010; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; McWhirter, Luginbuhl, et al., 2014).

Maria then shared a similar experience in which her middle school literature teacher had questioned her about being in ESOL classes.

> Because when I was in middle school they asked, "Were you ever in that program?" And I was like, "Yes, I was there for a few months and then they realized my English was perfectly fine." And they said, "You should have been in there longer," and I asked, "Why? My English is perfectly fine. I'm passing your class." "But I just don't feel like you really understand it." "But I'm making straight A's in your class. How is that complicated?" And they would say, "Well, you should have had it longer. I feel like you could have benefited better from that." And I'm like, "My grades contradict what you're telling me, but if you say that…"

Though this experience did not occur during Maria's high school years, it happened at some point along the educational pipeline. This experience provided further evidence to support that what happened in earlier grades could have deleterious effects on a student's educational outcomes in latter grades. Maria and Allison only spent a short time in the ESOL program and were able to make their way to AP, gifted, and advanced coursework that put them on the path to college. This was not the case for most Latinas/os in the K-12 pipeline (Contreras, 2011; Contreras & Gándara, 2009; Welton & Martinez, 2014). The focus group finding about tracking was a surprise finding that was not addressed by any survey question or finding.

Helping Future Latina High School Students Reach College

In order to identify best practices for helping Latina high school students transition to higher education, the researcher engaged Latina focus group participants in a discussion. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences and share a message to send the whole world about what Latinas need and when they need it. The key themes that evolved from their responses were as follows: 1) encourage us, 2) provide us with information, 3) provide information earlier, 4) educate our parents/guardians, and 5) schools must prioritize helping Latinas/os reach college.

Encourage Us

In reflection of the difficult and challenging transition experiences of the majority of the focus group participants, encouragement was very important on their pathway to college. It seemed to be the one thing that they had when they had nothing else. Addison described her transition experience as "overwhelming" and as requested, she let it guide her suggestion for Latinas' need for encouragement. In a very humble way Addison stated,

> Something that I would have loved to hear would have been, "Everything is going to be okay (smiles). You're not going to fail. Basically, college is your lighthouse in the storm. Don't put yourself down and don't think you can't do it because you can."

Addison's comments not only emphasized the importance of encouragement on the journey to college, but it also revealed her personal struggles with doubt and the fear of failure. She needed words of encouragement for her journey, and various focus group participants echoed its importance.

Maria shared her personal experience with racial/ethnic stereotyping and further emphasized the need for encouragement. She provided insight on how discouraging it

was to have a shadow cast upon your academic abilities and college aspirations based solely upon your race or ethnicity.

> I would first say don't discourage us. 'Cause I remember going through school and I had lots of people say, "Oh, you're Hispanic. You're not gonna make it." And I had actually a few teachers going, "You're actually going to college?" And I'm like, "Yes, I'm attending college. I graduated with honors." They're like, "You graduated with honors?" That was their biggest surprise, I remember. They just look at you like, "You got honors?" And I'm like, "Yes, I got honors." I did work my butt off so I could go to a great college. And I just feel like people should stop discouraging us and stop looking at the stereotypes of us; some of us…most of us actually want the best for us but we get stuck in bad situations…

Maria's call for encouragement versus discouragement speaks directly to the experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination faced by other participants in the study. She proved those who stereotyped her wrong by making the transition from high school to college, but she expressed the desire for those that follow her to have a better, more encouraging transition experience.

Juliet added that Latina/o students overall would benefit from people in schools encouraging and inspiring them. She shared that many Latina/o boys and girls were quiet because they were scared to speak up and ask questions about college due to the fear of being ridiculed or judged. Hidden behind her words was a need for schools to reach out to Latinas/os and create a safe environment in which they could inquire about college and career options without fear.

In the spirit of inspiring and encouraging Latina high school students to attend college, some participants suggested that schools should bring in Latina professionals to speak to them. A mentoring-styled program that would allow current or graduate students to come into the school and talk to high schoolers was also suggested. Maria explained:

> Prior to college you think that there's probably not many Hispanic people that go to education, but when you look into it there's a lot of people who are Hispanic and go far in life; and I think a lot of Latinas could get that boost from seeing like, another Latina be like…. I'm also a teacher, I'm this, I'm that….and then you're like, "I can do this then."

A participant whose major was nursing expressed that she had recently been inspired and motivated in the same way when she had met a lady who held a doctorate degree in nursing. She responded, "I was like "holy cow" like it is possible. I can do this!"

Comparison to survey results. The need for encouragement as expressed by focus group participants supported survey results showing that encouragement was one of the most helpful services provided to help them get into college. Survey results indicated that encouragement was the most frequently provided service/support for helping Latinas attend college, but this focus group finding confirmed that Latina participants did not get too much encouragement. The focus group explained that the difficulty of the transition experience made encouragement very important to Latinas for overcoming obstacles to higher education. Focus group participants suggested that mentoring-style program be used to encourage Latina high school students, which supports survey results showing that 28.9% of survey participants indicated that mentors would have helped them make a smoother transition to college.

Provide the Information We Need

In reflection of the difficulty that they experienced trying to get information about college, financial aid, and scholarships, focus group participants stated that more information needed to be provided to Latina high school students. Haley Rae declared:

> Empower Latinas, empower other Latinas…but in order for Latinas to feel empowered they have to have a path to success; but if it's not provided in high school then how can we empower others and our own self?

They did not just want to be educated to help themselves and their families, but to also help others in general. Maria stated:

> …Pretty much give us more information 'cause there's not much help for us…I feel. In the end there's not really any help for us besides our parents compared to every other race or ethnicity.

Latina participants stressed that if Latinas and other minorities were educated on the college admissions and financial aid process then they would have enough motivation to continue researching for more information.

Focus group participants agreed that counselors needed to be held accountable for providing college information to students. Participants felt very strongly about the counselor fulfilling their obligations to students. Allison suggested:

> I think that's what the counselors should have. They should have a test as to what their goal is, and I feel like encouraging students to go to college and helping them should be one of those goals.

One participant addressed the high student-to-counselor ratios that could limit counselors, but made the point that this did not explain their disregard for assisting Latina students with college preparation. Participants proclaimed that no one was asking for money but it was "free information" and that was all that they wanted.

Comparison to survey results. This focus group finding is consistent with survey results indicating that providing more information would help make the transition from high school to higher education smoother. Like the focus group findings, survey results also indicated the need for more information about college requirements (50.7%), financial aid, and scholarships (69.7%). The focus group findings are consistent with those of the survey concerning what would help make the high school to college transition process smoother.

Provide College Information Early

Focus group participants all agreed that more and earlier college, financial aid, and scholarship information should be provided. As expressed in their various experiences, information was vital to their college admission. They also reached the consensus that this information needed to be provided early; at least by the eighth or ninth grade year. The ninth grade year was indicated by participants as the year in which your HOPE scholarship GPA begins, which was why students needed to be made aware of how their grades could impact college and scholarship opportunities. Participants felt that the junior year was too late to provide the information to go to college because by that time your GPA could be too low to qualify for scholarships or meet college admission requirements.

> I feel it should start early in high school…So I feel like we need to start motivating because if you don't think you're going to college you're going to mess your GPA up…and you're not going to have an opportunity if you change your mind…

Most Latina participants were not informed about college until their junior or senior year in high school. One participant shared the late timing of her senior class meeting, which was why providing college information in earlier grades was important.

> Mine was the beginning of senior year. I remember we had a big seminar that college is coming up and I remember half of the students grunted, because they were like, "My GPA's ruined." 'Cause they never thought about it prior. I remember when I started freshman year, I remember every teacher…you would hear the teachers say, "It's gonna be worse in college." And that's the only time I think college was ever mentioned.

Participants also carried the belief that having senior meetings was not solely about providing information so that students could go to college, but more of a routine or task that needed to be checked off by the counselor. They did not feel that all counselors were

genuinely concerned about every student actually attending college. One participant summed it up as, "Hey, we need you to graduate; we need you to go to college so our reputation will go up."

Comparison to survey results. This focus group finding does not provide support for any specific survey results. However, it provides a resolution to the problem of getting information too late as expressed by some open responses about obstacles that could have prevented access to college. Various survey participants almost missed deadlines for college applications and financial aid due to getting information too late.

Provide Latina/o Parents with College Information

Focus group participants merged the home and the school by stressing that the parents/guardians of Latina high school students needed to be educated on the college-going process. One participant justified this saying, "They're the number one reason Latinas are going to college then they should have a say and help to be informed." Participants emphasized that parents/guardians needed to have information about college admissions requirements, financial aid, the FAFSA, and scholarships. Most participants' parents/guardians had not attended college and therefore they could not assist them with college admissions and financial aid paperwork. One participant further expressed the importance of parents/guardians being informed:

> Today there's actually….when I went home this past…2 weeks ago I was looking at télevisíon and there were actually commercials about the Hispanic Scholarship Fund and one of the news reporters was like, "Do you have a child who's going to college or who is in college? Well here's the website to apply for FAFSA, apply for this, this, and that." So, all these resources are now being informed to our parents, but now our parents like don't really know how to...apply it for us.

This participant expressed how mass media was providing information about resources, but yet it was not useful for Latina/o students unless their parents/guardians understood

how to use the information. Having knowledge about resources and knowing how to apply them were two different issues, which was why participants stressed the importance of educating the parents/guardians of Latina/o students.

Participants also stressed that the all information provided to Latina/o parents/guardians should be in Spanish so that they could understand it. This was an area of struggle for them and their parents. They began recalling high school meetings in which only paperwork in English was provided to their parents and then having to translate the meeting because the school did not have a translator present. The participants expressed how they would often lose information in translation and it would become very confusing for both them and their parents. The consensus was that information to parents/guardians should be disseminated in Spanish.

When asked about who should disseminate this college information to parents/guardians, participants expressed that it should be someone who has knowledge and experience with college and financial aid information. Participants provided the criterion for providing information though no individual or entity was eliminated as an option. In the spirit of giving back, Latina participants felt that they should help. One participant proclaimed:

> I feel like us. We need to be those people who can provide information for other generations because we see these upcoming college students and their parents are in the same position as our parents now. So it's like, "Oh, how can I help my own child?" But I feel like if we provide the kind of information that we didn't get then that it will definitely help parents.

A suggestion was also made to have a Hispanic Parents Night to inform parents/guardians about the college-going process. This could facilitate the formation of parent/guardian college support networks. Nevertheless, the consensus was that

parents/guardians needed to be well-informed on the processes and paperwork involved with the college process in order to better help future Latina high school students transition to higher education.

Comparison to survey results. The focus group findings related to providing Latina/o parents/guardians with college information indirectly supported survey results that were related to college information. The support is indirect because no survey questions or findings directly involved providing parents with college information. However, the focus group findings confirmed that parents/guardians had little knowledge about the transition process, which is consistent with survey findings indicating that the majority of parents/guardians had not attended higher education and that they were the tenth most frequently source of information about college requirements. Furthermore, the focus group findings and survey results confirmed and supported the need for college information being provided to Latina/o parents/guardians because they were the main source of assistance and encouragement for their daughters during the college transition process.

School District Focus on Latina Transition to College

Participants expressed that school systems needed to make deliberate efforts to reach out to Latina high school students in order to help them get to college. They stressed that systems needed to prioritize the college preparation of Latinas/os by providing the information that they needed early, educating parents/guardians on the process, and implementing programs or activities that facilitate access to college. In the words of Adeline:

> It also has a lot to do with the school board as well. They have the power to integrate these ideas into the system. They're not pushing or forcing schools to apply these principles.

Participants agreed that direction and guidance would need to come from the school board in order for Latina/o students to get the services and supports needed from their high schools.

Comparison to survey results. This focus group finding does not directly connect with any survey results. However, this finding provides a resolution that could help Latina high school students get the adequate transition services and supports that they need from institutional agents.

Focus Group Observations

The participants in the two focus groups had many commonalities in terms of their transition experiences, but they had clearly different approaches to addressing what Latinas need and racial discrimination. The participants in the ABAC focus group consisted of seven freshmen and one junior. The freshmen were in their first fall semester at ABAC when the focus group was conducted. The VSU focus group consisted of two juniors, one sophomore, and one freshman.

Perceptions

The two focus groups took different approaches to addressing what Latina high school students needed in order to help them go to college. The ABAC focus group participants mostly internalized their approach by focusing on what Latinas themselves needed to do, and the VSU group externalized their approach by addressing services and supports that needed to be provided to them by other entities. Regardless of their

approach, their ideas intersected which led to suggestions for ways to help Latinas transition to higher education that addressed both group's concerns and viewpoints.

Despite assistance not being provided to them by their counselors, the ABAC participants blamed no one. They blamed themselves and even other Latinas/os for not trying as being an issue. They seemed to accept that it was solely their responsibility to find information about college, and that no one else was obligated to help them. Again, they blamed no one for their struggle. Veronica made no further comments about her rude counselor other than his unavailability and the fact that he was "barely there." Angela also made it clear that no teachers helped her fill out paperwork, but she did not indicate any expectations for her teacher. Both Veronica and Angela dealt with their lack of assistance from others as an understanding that they "can't get all the help" and that they knew that they had to do some things on their own.

In contrast, the VSU focus group participants held their counselors accountable for failing to assist with college preparation. VSU participants expressed their expectation for counselors, which was consistent with their role, and they wanted them to fulfill it. These participants took an even broader look at the school system, and its role in helping Latinas get to college. VSU participants also did many things on their own to get to college, but they also felt that they should have been provided with assistance from their school.

Awareness of Racial Discrimination

The researcher did not ask any questions about racial discrimination during either focus group, but it was discussed by VSU participants as they talked about their counselor and teacher experiences. They acknowledged the presence of racism in their

high school experiences and provided specific incidents. They were fully aware of its presence and its impact on their lives and the lives of other Latinas/os at their high schools. VSU focus group participants had an awareness of covert forms of racism and provided evidence of them in addressing the disproportionality in opportunities for AP or gifted placement and in the availability of information.

The ABAC focus group participants did not directly address racial discrimination, but their comments and experiences carried racially biased undertones of which they may have been unaware. Jessica expressed how racial/ethnic stereotypes played a role in counselors not making the effort to encourage Latina/o high school students who were not planning to attend college. Mia also shared a teacher's lack of understanding about why Latinas/os needed a program to assist them with college preparation. No other participants in the ABAC focus group chose to respond or comment after these statements were made.

The ABAC participants were mostly freshmen who were more recently removed from their high schools and its experiences. It was likely that they had not yet realized the hidden racial issues that they may have experienced. As a key characteristic of institutional racism, covert forms of racism were hard to identify, because of their subtlety and normality in the daily functions of an organization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Otherwise, the ABAC participants did not feel safe to discuss any racialized experiences or there was nothing to discuss.

It was worth noting that despite the two focus groups differences in addressing the presence of racial discrimination, there were similarities in how some participants addressed it. Mia and Jessica in the ABAC group and Maria in the VSU group, all

seemed hesitant about addressing instances of racism. It seemed as though there was a stigma associated with minorities openly identifying racial discrimination. Time in college and being educated on the forces of racism might explain why the VSU group that had mainly juniors and sophomores were more open and progressive in their views and perceptions than the ABAC group that consisted of mainly freshmen.

Self-Reliance

Both sets of focus group participants exhibited a level of self-reliance that was different from each other. In reflection of the ABAC focus group the researcher noted that most of the participants were very self-reliant. It seemed that they embraced the challenge of the college going process though they had no idea how to get through the college application process. Of course, they needed information and assistance filling out paperwork because their transition experiences were stressful because of the lack of information and individual assistance. They were resilient; they waited on no one to help them, and they found their own way. The ABAC participants' self-reliance was exhibited as a display of inner strength.

In contrast, the VSU focus group was very vocal about services that should have been provided by their counselors. As result of life experiences and the knowledge gained through their college education, these participants took a broad view of the issues presented in the focus group. They came up with resolutions that would not only help Latinas, but all minorities. Though they held counselors and the school system accountable for helping Latinas with the college transition process, they indicated that they would help other Latinas/os and their parents as well. Not only did they want counselors and the school system to "step up" but they were ready and willing to be a

part of the solution by sharing the information with other Latinas/os. It was almost as though they were saying, "If you just give us the information, we will help our people." There was a level of inner strength displayed by them as individuals and for Latinas/os in general.

Comparative Analysis

This section integrates the quantitative and qualitative results from Phase I and II of the study. This triangulation of data from the online survey of phase one and the focus groups of Phase II served to increase the validity and generalizability of the overall findings. The survey results will be discussed with the focus group findings that explain and further explore them. This discussion will be followed by an interpretation of the collective findings. The research questions for the study will guide the discussion and interpretation of results and findings.

Research Question 1: What are Latina students' experiences in transitioning from high school to higher education?

Survey data derived from closed-end and open-ended responses that addressed different aspects of Latinas' transition from high school to higher education were used to answer this research question. The survey findings revealed that the majority of Latina survey participants did not have adequate support to make a successful transition to higher education. Encouragement to attend college was most often provided to participants, but they needed so much more. Participants faced many obstacles that could have prevented them from attending higher education. Their major obstacles were as follows: 1) lack of financial aid or money, 2) lack of information about financial aid, scholarships, and college, and 3) the lack of assistance filling out the FAFSA and other

financial aid paperwork. In spite of these obstacles, Latinas were determined to reach college, and they mostly sought out the information and assistance that they needed on their own.

The majority of the survey participants attended high schools in which they were minorities in their classrooms and in the total school population. Most participants experienced some level of racism within their school setting, and almost half felt that they had to assimilate in order to be in accepted in high school. Regardless of these experiences, only a few participants were discouraged from attending college as a result of these experiences.

Qualitative data from the focus groups conducted in Phase II was used to explain, confirm, and further explore Latina participants' transition experience. The transition experience for focus group participants was full of barriers to reaching higher education. Participants described their transition experiences as "confusing," "no help," "obstacles," "challenging," "scary," "frustrating," "difficult," and "overwhelming." Focus group participants reported that they did not receive all of the help that they needed in order to get into college. Like the survey participants, focus group participants lacked information about financial aid, scholarships, and the college admissions process. Participants had limited college support and those who were helpful to them had limited knowledge or limited time to assist them. Their experiences included racial discrimination that prevented access to information or assistance and avoidance in their classrooms.

Interpretation. The focus groups findings confirmed and validated the survey's finding that Latina participants' transition experience was full of obstacles that were

directly related to the lack of money and the lack of information about financial aid and scholarships. Focus group participants provided rich descriptions of how the lack of information and guidance during the transition process caused them to struggle. The impact of the obstacles to information and assistance identified in the survey were also revealed in the focus groups and indicated that these were not isolated events, but common to many Latina high school students in Georgia. The survey and focus group findings both indicated that students sought out information on their own. Survey and focus group data revealed that trying to transition to higher education was very stressful for Latina high school participants, but nevertheless they persevered. Open responses from the survey also were confirmed by the experiences of the focus group participants.

The findings from the survey and focus groups reveal that Latina students' transition experience from high school to higher education was filled with many obstacles and varying levels of racial discrimination. The majority of Latina participants in the survey and the focus group expressed that they lacked information, lacked help filling out paperwork, and lacked help preparing for admission exams. The Latina study participants were in a state of "lack" during their transition from high school to higher education. Overall, survey participants traveled the bumpy road to higher education alone.

Research Question 2: What are the forms of social and cultural capital that Latina students identify as helping them to transition from high school to higher education?

According to the survey and focus group findings, Latina study participants used combinations of both social and cultural capital to transition from high school to higher education. Social capital was synonymous with school-based support or services outside

of the school setting. Cultural capital was synonymous with home-based support. Overall, cultural capital was found to be the most beneficial form of capital for helping participants transition to higher education.

Social Capital

Counselors and teachers were the main sources of social capital for Latina survey participants. Guidance counselors and teachers were found to be the key institutional agents for helping participants transition to higher education. The survey found that guidance counselors were the most knowledgeable school agent and encouraged college attendance, but few survey participants received individual assistance from them. This lack of individual assistance was further supported by focus group participants who confirmed that their "counselors were never there." Furthermore, the services most frequently provided by counselors were generic. As further explained by the focus group, generic services usually came in the form of routine information about college provided in large groups and distributed in handouts. The services most often provided by counselors were not the services that Latinas needed most to make a successful transition to higher education. Counselors were consistently found to be the fifth most helpful with the college applications process and for getting into college. The services provided by counselors were limited. Overall, survey and focus group findings showed that counselors were not helpful to Latina participants during their transition from high school to higher education.

However, the survey found teachers to be the most helpful school agent for helping Latinas transition from high school to higher education. Teachers were consistently found to be more helpful than counselors with both the college application

process and for getting into college. They encouraged college attendance and provided individual assistance more often than counselors. AP/PreAP teachers more frequently provided college information than other types of teachers. Thus, students who were not in AP/PreAP or advanced level courses were less likely to receive any college information. Students taking ELL classes were the least likely to receive any college information from their teachers.

Responses to an open-ended survey item (Q62) about individuals who were most helpful to participants' transition to college, revealed that some participants had at least one teacher who had bonded with them, provided time, and individual assistance with the transition process. In support of this finding, focus group participants who had helpful teachers explained that teachers tended to be more helpful than counselors because they spent more individual time with them. Participants who had "especially helpful" teachers stated that they had a close teacher-student relationship with them that existed prior to the need for transition assistance. On the contrary, focus group participants who did not have an "especially helpful" teacher stated that teachers encouraged them and provided some information, but they did not receive individual assistance. Furthermore, focus group participants revealed that encouragement from teachers did not always come with college information. Overall, teachers were more helpful than counselors, but they also provided limited assistance for helping Latinas reach higher education. Though teachers were more helpful than counselors, they were not as helpful as parents/guardians and friends.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital was the driving force behind study participants transitioning from high school to higher education. The survey found that the forms of cultural capital that

Latinas utilized to transition to higher education were their aspirations, parents/guardians, *consejos*, and family/cultural values, and friends. Latina survey participants had high aspirations for college and degree attainment. As a result of these high aspirations the majority of them sought out college information on their own and often used the internet to do so.

Furthermore, survey findings showed that stories of family struggle (*consejos*) encouraged survey participants to attend college. This finding was further supported and explained by the focus group finding that the struggles experienced by the parents/guardians of Latina focus group participants inspired them to attend college. The majority of focus group participants reflected on the sacrifices that their parents/guardians had made or were still making in order to provide for them or other family members. Participants were emotionally moved by the negative impact that these sacrifices had made on the health of their parents/guardians and expressed a determination to attain a degree so that they could alleviate those struggles.

The survey and focus groups both support the finding that the parents/guardians of Latina study participants highly valued education and highly encouraged their daughters to attend college more so than any other option. Both parents/guardians also discouraged them from starting a family and having children, which is supported by the survey and focus groups. This allowed study participants to defy traditional cultural gender stereotypes with the support of their parents/guardians.

The survey found that the most important values stressed by parents/guardians were hard work, good education, respect, and "doing better than they had" done in life. Focus group participants explained that their parents/guardians lived these values, which

inspired them to do the same. Findings from the survey and focus groups support that parents/guardians believed that "hard work" and a "good education" would help study participants achieve success in life. Focus group participants also shared that their parents/guardians taught them to resist the forces of racial discrimination by working harder and believing in themselves. This parental guidance likely explains why only a few (7%) Latina survey participants who experienced racial discrimination were discouraged from attending college, while the vast majority of them were encouraged to attend college or their desire was unaffected.

Survey and focus group findings also showed that parents/guardians were more helpful with the transition process than friends, counselors, teachers, or any other entity. Despite the parents/guardians of survey participants being the least knowledgeable about the college-going process, they were also most helpful with the application process. This was also the case for the parents of focus group participants. More specifically, the survey findings showed that mothers/female guardians were more encouraging concerning college attendance and more vocal about post-high school plans than fathers/male guardians. Overall, the survey revealed that mothers/female guardians had the greatest influence on the development of their daughters' educational goals.

Outside of the support provided by parents/guardians at home, Latinas had their friends. The vast majority of the friends of Latina survey participants encouraged them, attended college, and half of them enrolled at their current college. The friends of survey participants were more knowledgeable about college admission requirements than parents/guardians and were the second most helpful individual to Latinas with the college application process and for getting into college. Friends served as a bridge between the

home, school, and community. Latina study participants were able to gain access to college information and assistance through their friends that they may have never received from school or home supports. Latinas and their friends informed each other about deadlines, college and scholarship opportunities, and assisted each other with completing paperwork. Most of all, they struggled together and served as moral support for each other in the college transition process. Friends were valuable to Latina survey participants for transitioning from high school to higher education.

Interpretation. Based upon findings from the survey and focus groups, Latina study participants identified various forms of cultural capital and two key forms of social capital as helping transition from high school to higher education. Cultural capital was most beneficial and had the most far-reaching impact on Latinas' transition experience. The forms of cultural capital that Latinas identified as helping them transition from high school to higher education were their aspirations, parents/guardians, *consejos*, cultural values, and their friends.

The social capital used by participants provided some help, but also created barriers to information and individual assistance. Teachers and counselors were the two forms of social capital that Latina study participants identified as helpful to their transition. However, teachers were more helpful than counselors and were considered the institutional agent of choice for helping with the college transition process. Overall, parents/guardians were the most helpful to Latinas getting into college.

3. What are the perceived best practices for transitioning Latina high school students into institutions of higher education?

As supported by both the survey and focus group, encouragement was the main type of assistance provided to Latina participants to help them transition to higher education. Focus group participants expressed that encouragement was very helpful to them, but they still needed other types of assistance to help them get into college. Open-ended survey responses (Q62) indicated that services/supports provided by parents/guardians, teachers, or counselors that provided Latina participants with information about college and financial aid, and provided individual assistance completing paperwork were most helpful to them getting into college.

Furthermore, survey participants indicated that they could have made a smoother transition (Q61) to college if they had been provided with more information about financial aid/scholarships, college requirements, and admissions exams. More help preparing financial aid and college applications, and help preparing for admission exams were also services that would have helped them make a smoother transition. The two survey items (Q61 and Q62) validated each other because the services that survey participants found most helpful to their transition were also services that would have helped them make a smoother transition to college.

In order to help future high school students reach higher education, focus group participants expressed that Latina high school students need to be encouraged to attend college. They also stressed the importance of counselors providing more information about college, financial aid, and scholarships, which supports the survey findings. Focus group participants indicated that information needed be provided earlier than the eleventh

and twelfth grade, which is when information was provided to them. They agreed that college information should be provided by the eighth or ninth grade. Focus group participants emphasized the need for parents/guardians to be informed on the college admissions requirements, financial aid, the FAFSA, and scholarships. They stressed that parents would also benefit from the information being communicated to them in Spanish. Lastly, focus group participants expressed that school districts needed to make targeted efforts to help Latina high school students transition into higher education.

Interpretation. Based upon the survey and focus group findings, the perceived best practices as established by Latina study participants are as follows:

1) Encourage Latinas to attend college in word, action, and by facilitating the following opportunities:
    a. Mentoring from college students or college graduates
    b. Speakers who are Latina/o professionals
    c. Latina/o role models
2) Provide more information about financial aid, scholarships, college admission requirements, and admissions exams.
3) Provide more individual assistance for completing financial aid paperwork and college applications.
4) Provide help preparing for admissions exams.
5) Provide college information to Latina students as early as eighth grade, but no later than ninth grade (i.e., admission requirements, financial aid availability, scholarships, etc.).

6) Reach out to Latina high school students to encourage them and provide college information.
7) Provide Latina/o parents/guardians with information about the college admissions process and financial aid.
    a. Provide verbal and non-verbal (i.e., letters, flyers, forms, etc.) communications in Spanish.
    b. Host a "Hispanic Parents Night" in order to provide college information.
    c. Educate Latina/o parents on college admissions and financial aid so that they can help other parents.

The manner in which these services are provided is also very important to insure their effectiveness. Latina study participants benefited most from transition services and supports that were provided by individuals who were caring, kind, and provided time and attention to their needs.

Theoretical Framework Analysis

This section will begin with a brief overview of the theoretical lens and conceptual framework used in this mixed methods study. The brief overview will be followed by the analysis of the findings as they apply to the theoretical frameworks and lastly, an interpretation.

The Latino critical race theory (LatCrit) and community cultural wealth model (CCW) were used as the theoretical frameworks in this research study because they complement each other for this study. As discussed in the literature review, LatCrit is a subcategory of critical race theory (CRT) that reveals and opposes the oppressive forces

of racism and its existence as a normal part of the daily lives of Latinas/os (Delgado, 2012). It is used as theoretical lens for this study in order to identify covert and overt forms of racism that may have created barriers to college transition for Latina study participants.

The CCW model complements LatCrit in that it is designed to defy cultural deficit thinking by revealing the wealth in the Latina/o culture (Yosso, 2005). It is used in the study to understand the role of cultural capital in Latinas' transition from high school to higher education. The community cultural wealth model allowed the researcher to understand how Latina study participants overcame school-based barriers and the potential forces of racism in order to transition to higher education. The researcher analyzed the survey results and focus findings using LatCrit and the CCW model.

Latino Critical Race Theory

Findings from both the online survey and focus groups were analyzed using LatCrit as the theoretical lens. The survey revealed that the vast majority of Latinas were underrepresented in their high schools and within their classrooms. Latinas who responded to the survey perceived that other Latina/o student at their high schools were not treated as fairly as they were by teachers and counselors. The difference in perceptions of fairness is a possible indication that covert forms of racism were at work. The majority of the survey participants (69.2%) participated in AP/PreAP programming, which is likely to come with higher status and more privilege than that of non-AP/PreAP Latina/o students in the school setting. Therefore, it is not uncommon for them to feel as though they were treated more fairly than other Latina/o students at their school. As a result of their AP/PreAP privilege they may not have recognized the racial discrimination

that existed in their school. However, 55.7% (279) of Latina survey participants indicated that other students discriminated against them based upon their race.

Almost two-thirds of survey participants reported that they did not experience or rarely experienced racial discrimination while in high school. On the other hand, 78.8% (395) of the survey participants experienced some level of racial discrimination; great or small. Almost half (49.8%, $f = 249$) of respondents felt the need to assimilate in order to be accepted during high school. The mere presence of racial discrimination and participants' need to assimilate indicates that racial oppression was an underlying factor in their school experience.

Furthermore, findings from the focus group revealed covert and overt forms of racism. Without being asked any questions pertaining to racism, the VSU focus group participants readily provided information as they shared their transition experiences. Maria shared how her guidance counselor would not assist her with the FAFSA application despite her repeated requests, but instead completed a White female student's entire FAFSA for her. Haley Rae shared how her AP Calculus teacher consistently ignored her when she raised her hand during class and had a reputation of losing the work of minority students in order to give them poor grades. The failure of Maria's counselor to assist her is institutional neglect and Haley Rae's teacher avoiding her and intentionally making efforts to hinder her academic success and that of other minorities is institutional abuse (Foxen, 2010; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009). Institutional neglect and institutional abuse are two practices that function to marginalize students and hinder educational opportunities in educational settings.

Racial disparities were also noted in the participants' recognition for Latina/o students' underrepresentation and limited access to AP/PreAP and gifted programming. The VSU focus group even acknowledged the fact that despite having high academic class rankings, the Latinas/os at their schools never received any scholarships during their school's honor's ceremonies. They recognized that "minorities" and "lower class people" were allowed to "fall between the cracks."

Both focus groups acknowledged the racial/ethnic stereotypes imposed on Latinas/os. Evidence of internalized racial/ethnic stereotypes was also noted in the comments of two focus group participants; one from each focus group location.

> Maria: ...or like even students who will come up to you and they're like, "How did you get into these AP programs?" I was like, "You just worked hard," and they say, "I've tried." But that's the sad thing. They don't…we get really badly discriminated against because of that.
>
> Jessica: Um, so I feel like for "us" a lot of people have the mindset that we like can't afford college. Like we don't have what is necessary. Like resources to go to college, so like we don't even try. I think that's a big problem with our culture kind of thing. Um, but obviously we're all here so we all wanted to come to college.

It is quite notable that Maria was a member of the VSU focus group in which they had discussed the underrepresentation of Latinas/os in AP programming and how the school limits student access to the program. Maria quickly abandoned her understanding of the school's control over who gains access to programming and asserted that other Latinas/os really did not work hard to get into to AP courses. Jessica acknowledged that Latinas/os are stereotyped as not wanting to attend college or not having the resources to attend but then blamed them for not trying to attend. Both Maria and Jessica had internalized racial/ethnic stereotypes of Latinas/os without recognizing it (Welton & Martinez, 2014). The participants resorted to accusing the oppressed for the existence of the oppression,

which is consistent with prior research concerning the effects of institutional racism on marginalized groups (Gonzalez et al., 2012; Welton & Martinez, 2014).

The Latino critical race theory is important for understanding how the forces of racism impacted the transition and schooling experiences of Latina study participants. The pervasive nature of institutional racism has made the Latina/o achievement gap, the Latina/o college access gap, and the underrepresentation of Latinas/os in AP/PreAP and gifted courses appear as a persistent, unresolved educational issue that stems from cultural deficits. LatCrit counters the forces of racism and reveals its presence in order to empower marginalized groups.

Community Cultural Wealth Model

Community cultural wealth had a major impact on the Latina survey participants' transition from high school to higher education. The results of the survey indicated that cultural wealth was the most beneficial form of capital used by Latinas for getting into college. Aspirational, familial, social capital, navigational, and resistant capital were all utilized by Latina study participants.

Aspirational Capital. The aspirational capital of study participants helped them overcome a lack of information and financial resources in order attend college. The vast majority of the study participants had always aspired to attend college and most of them desired to achieve post-graduate degrees. Aspirational capital is evidence in survey results showing that the majority of survey participants sought out information on their own. Many focus group participants also expressed that they had little to no help in the transition process, but they were relentless and found their way to college.

Familial Capital. Parental/guardian encouragement and support as a form of familial capital superseded school-based social capital. The study showed that parents/guardians most frequently encouraged college attendance and were considered most helpful for them getting into college. Parents/guardians also shared *consejos* with their daughters which encouraged them to attend college. Focus group participants often expressed that the stories of parental/family struggle inspired them to attend college. The values of hard work and getting a good education were two of many values that parents/guardians stressed that served to strengthen their Latina daughters' aspirations.

Social Capital. The friends of Latinas represented social capital as cultural wealth because they provided encouragement and emotional support while serving as a bridge to various other social networks between the school, community, and home settings (Yosso, 2005). The open responses of Latina survey participants revealed an information network in which scholarship information, deadlines, and financial aid information was exchanged and served a mutual benefit to both friends in the college transition process. Latinas and their friends struggled together, helped each other, and the majority of their friends transitioned to college as well.

Navigational Capital. Navigational capital is the ability to navigate through organizations and institutions that were not intended for Latinas/os (Yosso, 2005). The study participants utilized this type of capital to navigate through high school and then into college. Over two-thirds of the survey participants were in the AP program and the vast majority participated in extracurricular activities, which facilitated social interactions and insight on social norms that would be beneficial to them throughout their lives.

Focus group participants expressed information seeking behaviors that paved their way to college.

Resistant Capital. Resistant capital was a combination of the other forms of cultural wealth at work that empowered Latinas to challenge and overcome inequality (Yosso, 2005). It allowed Latina participants to resist racial discrimination by persisting to achieve educational and career goals. This cultural capital was demonstrated in survey results indicating that very few survey participants were discouraged from attending higher education due to racial discrimination. The majority of survey participants who had experiences of racial discrimination were either encouraged to attend or their desire was unaffected. Focus group participants also expressed that their parents encouraged them to resist racism by working hard and being confident that they can accomplish their goals.

Summary

LatCrit and the CCW model complemented each other in this mixed methods study by acknowledging the presence of racial inequity in the transition experience of Latina study participants. CCW defied racism by focusing on the cultural wealth of Latinas versus the cultural deficit view. Despite survey results not providing a clear indication of a racialized transition experience, the focus group expressed its presence.

The use of LatCrit as the theoretical lens revealed internalized racial/ethnic stereotypes and covert forms of racism that were not recognized by Latina study participants. The bigger picture is that institutional racism is responsible for the history of institutional neglect and institutional abuse that has resulted in the underrepresentation of Latinas/os in higher education. However, the CCW model opposes cultural deficit

thinking that results from racism to reveal the wealth in the various forms of cultural capital that Latina study participants used to overcome barriers to higher education. The study participants used aspirational capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital to pave their way to higher education. Overall, the CCW model was instrumental for explaining how Latina high school students in Georgia used their cultural capital to overcome school-based barriers and institutional racism in order to access higher education.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the study, followed by the research questions, conclusions of the study, recommendations for practice, recommendations for further research, and the significance of the study.

Overview of Study

The problem of the study is that in the U.S. very little attention has been placed on helping Latina high school graduates transition to higher education, which has resulted in their underrepresentation at this educational level. The purpose of this mixed methods sequential explanatory study was to describe the best practices for providing transition services and supports to Latina high school students in the state of Georgia. The study was conducted in the Fall 2015 Semester. In the first phase of the study an online survey was completed by 502 Latina undergraduates from 14 colleges and universities within the University System of Georgia (USG). The online survey consisted of 85 questions that addressed participant demographics, social capital, cultural capital, and the transition experience. The findings from the first phase of the study were used to develop the five questions that were used in the focus group interview.

In Phase II, two focus groups were conducted to explain the findings from the online survey. The first focus group was conducted at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) and the second focus group was conducted at Valdosta State University (VSU). Both institutions are part of the University System of Georgia. There were a

total of 12 focus group participants in the qualitative phase of the study. Various themes emerged from the analysis of responses to each of the five focus group questions posed. The collective findings from the online survey and focus groups led to the description of best practices for providing transition services and supports to Latina high school students in Georgia.

The research questions that guided this mixed methods study are as follows:

1) What are Latina students' experiences in transitioning from high school to higher education?

2) What forms of social and cultural capital did Latina students use to help them transition from high school to higher education?

3) What are the perceived best practices for transitioning Latina high school students into institutions of higher education?

Findings Related to the Literature

The factors that the researcher investigated in this study were the Latina transition experience, social capital, cultural capital, and perceived best practices for helping Latinas transition from high school to higher education.

Transition Experience

"…I just felt like I was blindly going towards a path that no one in my family had ever been through and everyone else had grandparents, aunts, uncles, big sisters, and big brothers to tell them how to prepare for college. All I had was the desire to go." As supported by previous research, the findings from this mixed methods study indicated that the transition experience from high school to higher education for Latina study participants was difficult and full of obstacles (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras,

2009; Perna & Kurban, 2013). The crack in the educational pipeline for Latinas has yet to be filled, which is why many of them continue to "fall between the cracks," as expressed by a focus group participant. Despite the mass propaganda and the constant push for high school students to attend college, the disparate distribution of college information to Latina/o students remains unchanged. Latinas/os are still experiencing the inequitable access to higher education that has existed for over 40 years.

Though just under half of the study participants were first-generation college students the majority of them were in a state of "lack." The lack of financial resources was the most frequently indicated obstacle to study participants reaching higher education, which was consistent with prior research (Contreras, 2011; Diaz-Strong, Gómez, Luna-Duarte, & Meiners, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Perna & Kurban, 2013). The availability of financial resources was the key determining factor of whether Latina/o students will be able access higher education (Contreras, 2011; Perna & Kurban, 2013). Study participants lacked information about financial aid, college admissions requirements, and how to go through the college admissions process overall. They also had complications completing the FAFSA and other financial aid and college paperwork.

The lack of information was directly related to the inadequate support provided to them by institutional agents. Participants' parents were their main source of college support, but they were also uninformed about the college-going process (Bohon et al., 2005). Gonzalez et al's (2012) study conducted in the Southeast also found that high school students and their parents lacked college information and counselors nor teachers provided them with any information. The majority of Latina study participants expressed that they received limited to no support from their teachers and counselors. The lack of

information about financial aid and college-going is a school-related barrier that persists for Latina/o high school students who attempt to reach higher education (McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013).

Racial discrimination. Latino critical race theory (LatCrit) was used as the theoretical lens in order to reveal the presence of racism or racial discrimination that may have existed in the transition experience Latinas. The majority of survey participants did not experience or rarely experienced racial discrimination during high school. The focus groups revealed that Latinas experienced overt and covert forms of racism. In many instances, participants were unable to identify the forces of racial discrimination, which is often the case with institutional racism. The experiences shared by focus group participants revealed the internal oppression expressed in Foxen's (2010) study in which students blamed themselves and others for not gaining access to AP classes or seizing other opportunities. The reality is that Latinas/os and other students of color have been historically underrepresented in AP or gifted programming.

Social Capital

Counselors. Study participants considered their high school counselors to be the most knowledgeable school agent for college information, but they were not beneficial for Latina students' transition to higher education (González et al., 2003; Gonzalez et al., 2012; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; Menacker, 1971; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Counselors encouraged Latinas to go to college, but they provided little support to make their transition possible. Less than half of study participants received individualized one-on-one support from counselors and the most frequently provided service was signing students up for college admission exams and making high school course selections.

These results are consistent with McWhirter, Valdez et. al's (2013) study which found that counselors were not helpful and mainly provided course recommendations with no transition support.

Latina study participants sought out their counselors for individual assistance with their transition, but consistent with Martinez's (2014) study, their counselors were not available but pamphlets and other generic forms of information were. Furthermore, the most frequently repeated statement among focus group participants in the study was that "my counselor was never there," which is directly aligned with Vela-Gude et al.'s (2009) study and article titled, *My Counselor Was Never There*. Based upon study findings and consistent with prior research, high school counselors were unlikely sources of support for helping Latinas transition from high school to higher education (González et al., 2003; Gonzalez et al., 2012; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; Menacker, 1971; Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

Teachers. In contrast to counselors, teachers were identified by survey participants as the most helpful school agent with the transition process. This finding is consistent with prior studies that have also identified teachers as the school agent of choice (Contreras, 2011; González et al., 2003; Griffin, Hutchins, & Meece, 2011; Martinez, 2014). Teachers encouraged Latina high school students to attend college, but AP/PreAP teachers were more likely to provide more encouragement than other types of teachers (Cavazos & Cavazos, 2010; González et al., 2003; Martinez, 2014; Welton & Martinez, 2014; Zarate, Sáenz, & Osguera, 2011). Though teachers encouraged college attendance they did not often provide information or individual assistance with the transition process regardless of the academic programming or student achievement

(Gándara, 1995). Unlike the findings of Contreras's (2011) study, participants did not indicate that their teachers were a main source of information. As indicated by the survey and focus group findings, some Latinas had a teacher who took the time out to provide information and individual assistance with paperwork while others did not (McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013).

Counselors and teachers were the institutional agents at the high school level that were the gatekeepers to beneficial college information. Based upon study results, their knowledge did not benefit all students equitably, though teachers were more helpful than counselors. A few study participants from the survey and focus groups shared isolated experiences with counselors and teachers who were very helpful and provided them with information, time, attention, and individual assistance during their transition process. This was uncommon for the vast majority of study participants.

The results of this study and prior studies provided evidence that counselors and teachers are not very helpful to Latinas' transition to higher education. This phenomenon is not a coincidence, but is part of the historic pattern of institutional neglect that is supported by decades of research that implicates the need for improvement in this area. Institutional agents hold valuable information that can help underrepresented groups reach college, but this information does not get disseminated to all students. Though teachers are able to provide some assistance to high school students, their job role and duties do not make it easy for them to render transition services. Teachers are secondary sources and somewhat of a safety net. The bottom line is that the majority of Latina study participants did not receive the help needed to reach higher education. The

institutional agents at their schools did not equip them with the information and guidance necessary for them to make a successful transition to higher education.

Extracurricular Activities. The majority of the study participants were involved in extracurricular activities, which indicates that they were active in their school community at some level. The social interactions gained through participation in extracurricular activities only provided some college information, while those that volunteered barely received any. Furthermore, extracurricular activities and volunteerism were not notable sources of college information for helping Latina study participants transition from high school to higher education. One would expect that most participants that participated in extracurricular activities or volunteerism would have been more likely to receive college information, but this was not the case for Latinas in this study.

College Preparation Programs. Prior research indicated that college preparation programs and mentoring were beneficial for providing Latina/o high school students with the information and assistance needed to make a successful transition to higher education (Calaff, 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Perna & Kurban, 2013). Only 6% (30) of survey participants were in a college preparation program during high school, which is consistent with Gandára and Contreras' (2009) finding that only about 5% of school-aged Latinas had access to such programs. Most programs, such as Upward Bound and GEAR UP are federally funded, but they seldom reach Latina/o youth (Calaff, 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Perna & Kurban, 2013). This study finding provides further evidence that most Latinas/os never gain access to college preparation programs that are designed to help increase college attendance for them. This is just another example of how

inequitable access to services and supports has led to the continued underrepresentation of Latinas in higher education.

Mentoring. Though more Latinas reported having access to a mentor than participating in college preparation programs, the vast majority did not have a mentor during high school. Mentors were often provided through college preparation programs and also served to provide emotional support, bridging, advocacy, role modeling, and access to college information and assistance. Survey participants who found their mentors most helpful for getting into college referenced that they provided encouragement, believed in them, bonded with them, or provided information and assistance with all aspects of their transition to college. Slightly over one-fourth of participants indicated that having a mentor would have helped them make a smoother transition to college.

Current College. Most Latina study participants did not receive transition assistance from their current college. Participants who did receive help mainly received assistance through mailings and college visitation days. These services basic and are routine practices by most colleges/universities. Only a few participants received assistance through meeting with a college recruiter from their current college. Receiving mailings and visiting the colleges required some initiative on behalf of Latina survey participants. In reality, the current colleges of the majority of survey participants provided very little assistance with their transition process.

Summary

The reality is that the social capital available to Latina study participants was limited and inadequate at best. Counselors and teachers were their main source of

information and assistance, but they received very little help overall. Institutional agents had the most valuable information, but provided the least services and supports for transition. Despite most study participants taking AP courses and participating in extracurricular activities, their participation did not necessarily lead to a wealth of information.

Community Cultural Wealth

Cultural capital played a major a role in helping Latina high school students in Georgia transition to higher education. Findings from the survey and focus groups revealed that cultural capital was the most consistent and persistent factor in the transition experience of Latina study participants. It superseded all other forms of capital. These findings are consistent with the use of Yosso's (2005) CCW model, which was used as the theoretical framework in the study in order to reveal the wealth in the cultural capital of Latinas.

Aspirational Capital. As found in prior research, Latina study participants had very high aspirations for attending college and overcame informational, financial, and various other obstacles in order to bring their dreams to fruition (Gándara, 1995; Huber, 2009; Luna & Martinez, 2012; Yosso, 2005). The majority of study participants had always wanted to attend college, but those who did not always feel this way showed an increase in aspirations from ninth to twelfth grade which supported previous research studies (Gándara, O'Hara, & Guitiérrez, 2004; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; McDonough, 1997). The aspirational capital of each Latina and was instrumental to their college access.

In reflection of one study participant's response, "all that I had was the desire to go," exemplifies the power of aspirational capital in Latinas' transition to higher education. This is also evidenced by survey findings that showed that the majority of study participants sought out college information on their own and used the internet to facilitate those searches. The aspirational capital exhibited by Latina study participants made them resilient to obstacles and was the driving force behind their perseverance and determination to attend college. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with prior studies (Burciaga, Huber, & Solorzano, 2010; Hurtado, Pollack, & Menacker, 1971; Valencia & Black, 2002) that dispelled the cultural deficit driven thought that the college access gap existed for Latinas/os due to their lack of aspirations (Valencia & Black, 2002).

Familial Capital. Familial capital in the form of *consejos*, encouragement, and family values was the foundation of support for Latina study participants during their transition from high school to higher education (Yosso, 2005). The parents/guardians of Latinas were their key source of familial capital. Their parents/guardians were instrumental for providing inspiration, encouragement, and assistance during the transition process.

The majority of Latina study participants were encouraged to attend college by the *consejos* shared by their parents/guardians. These stories of family and parental struggle nurtured their aspirations for higher education, which is supported by previous research conducted by Gándara (1995), Gonzalez et al. (2012), and Stanton-Salazar (2001). *Consejos* had a profound impact on Latina study participants. Focus group participants spoke at length about the sacrifices that their parents made in coming to the U.S. to give their family a better life. They spoke of witnessing their parents doing hard

labor, struggling, and sacrificing their health and well-being for the good of the family. As a result, they wanted to give something back, which meant that they needed to further their education and "do better than" their parents had done in life (Huber, 2009; Luna & Martinez, 2012).

Regardless of the presence or absence of transition services and supports, parental encouragement was a consistent factor for participants within this study and across prior studies (Cervantes, 2010; González, 2003; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013). Parents provided multiple levels of support that ranged from encouragement and emotional support to financially supporting their college dreams. Parents/guardians highly valued education and strongly encouraged their daughters to attend college (Calaff, 2008; Liou, Antrop-González, & Cooper, 2009; Luna & Martinez, 2012; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). They held the understanding that college was the pathway to prosperity and a future without struggle. Furthermore, parents/guardians discouraged their daughters from getting married and starting a family, which defies traditional Latina/o culture and symbolizes that the tide is changing for the group. Though most parents/guardians had not attended college and had no knowledge of the transition process, they were selected as most helpful with the college application process and for getting into college (Griffin et al., 2011). The reality is that parents/guardians with little knowledge about the college-going process were more helpful than counselors and teachers who had a wealth of college knowledge and resources.

As previously found in various studies, Latina participants reported that their mothers had the most impact on their educational goals and encouraged college attendance more than their fathers (Gándara, 1995; Liou et al., 2009; Luna & Martinez,

2013; Welton & Martinez, 2014). This is also consistent with Valdés's (1996) description of the cultural role of the mother as the teacher of the *educacíon* in the Latina/o household. This study finding re-emphasized the importance of Latina high school graduates attending college by further supporting Latinas as the cornerstone of the family and the driving force in the educational future of their children (Durán, 1983; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gándara et al., 2013). Mothers/female guardians were more vocal about the future goals of their daughters than fathers/male guardians.

Latina participants reported that their parents/guardians most frequently stressed hard work, getting a good education, respect, and a better quality of life; doing better than their parents had done in life. The aspirational capital of study participants were at least partly likely result of the values that their parents/guardians had taught them. Overall, aspirational and familial capital had an overwhelming impact on the college transition process for Latina high school students. It is easy for those with marginalized views of Latinas/os to continue to believe that Latina/o parents/guardians would want their daughters to be nothing more than field laborers and housekeepers (Zarate & Conchas, 2010).

Social Capital. The vast majority of survey participants had a friend that encouraged them to attend college. Most of these same friends went on to attend college, and half of them attended the same college as survey participants. The friends in the social network of Latina survey participants were not as helpful as parents, but they were more helpful than teachers and counselors. They served as a link between home and school support. As indicated by open-ended survey responses, Latinas and their friends helped each other in the transition process by keeping each other informed about

deadlines and scholarships, and assisting each other with the completion of paperwork, which is consistent with Gonzalez et al.'s (2003) study. They were comrades in the college transition process that provided moral support to each other.

Resistant Capital. The vast majority of Latina participants who experienced racial discrimination did not allow their experiences to discourage them from attending college. These experiences either encouraged them to attend college or did not affect their desire at all. These findings are consistent with prior research findings that Latina/o students did not allow racial discrimination or inequitable educational opportunities to prevent them from attending college (Gándara et al., 2013; Liou et al., 2009; Welton & Martinez, 2014). High hopes and dreams for degree attainment coupled with resilience, hard work, respect, parental support, and the desire for a better life gave Latinas the power to overcome the forces of racial discrimination. Some Latinas even shared how their parents specifically advised and encouraged them that they would have work harder and that they held the ability to achieve as much as any other racial group.

Navigational Capital. Latina study participants demonstrated navigational capital through their ability to make the transition from high school to higher education with very little help. Latinas' social interactions through their participation in AP or advanced academic programming and extracurricular activities allowed them to learn social norms and skills necessary for gaining access to institutions that were not intended for their racial/ethnic group (Liou et al., 2009; Luna & Martinez, 2012). These experiences taught them how to successfully navigate through predominately White institutions. The majority of study participants navigated through predominately White high schools in

which they sat in predominately White classes, and then made their way to colleges/universities in which they would again be a minority.

Perceived Best Practices for Providing Transition Services and Support

As supported by prior research, Latina study participants consistently lacked information about financial aid and college information which was consistent with their lack of social capital (Bohon et al., 2005; Burciaga et al., 2010; McWhirter, Valdez et al., 2013; McWhirter, Luginbuhl, & Brown, 2014). Based upon the responses of Latina study participants, the best practices for helping Latina high school students transition to higher education are as follows:

1) Encourage Latinas to attend college in word, action, and by facilitating the following opportunities:
    a. Mentoring from college students or college graduates
    b. Speakers who are Latina/o professionals
    c. Latina/o role models
2) Provide more information about financial aid, scholarships, college admission requirements, and admissions exams.
3) Provide more individual assistance for completing financial aid paperwork and college applications.
4) Provide help preparing for admissions exams.
5) Provide college information to Latina students as early as eighth grade, but no later than ninth grade (i.e., admission requirements, financial aid availability, scholarships, etc.).

6) Reach out to Latina high school students to encourage them and provide college information.
7) Provide Latina/o parents/guardians with information about the college admissions process and financial aid.
    a. Provide verbal and non-verbal (i.e., letters, flyers, forms, etc.) communications in Spanish.
    b. Host a "Hispanic Parents Night" in order to provide college information.
    c. Educate Latina/o parents on college admissions and financial aid so that they can help other parents.

These services were indicated in both the survey and focus group interviews as key services needed in order to make a successful college transition. Providing information to Latinas and their parents is consistent with the funds of knowledge, which is one of Stanton-Salazar's (2001) six forms of institutional support.

Timing. The time in which information was provided was very important. Latina participants suggested that information about college requirements and financial aid should be provided as early as eighth grade, but no later than ninth grade. They expressed that the eleventh and twelfth grade was too late to inform students about college information because it did not provide adequate time for students to achieve the grade point average or admission test scores required to meet scholarship and admission requirements. Providing early information about college requirements and financial aid is essential to Latina high school students' transition to higher education.

Delivery. The best practices have been identified, but how these services are delivered to Latina high school students and their parents/guardians is paramount to their effectiveness. Institutional agents or individuals who provide transition services and support to Latinas or their parents/guardians should demonstrate caring, kindness, and respect. They should also provide adequate time and attention to address Latina students' transition needs. Time should be allotted to explain information or answer any questions that Latinas or their parents/guardians may have. Consistent with study findings and prior research, Latinas found individuals who took the time to explain information to be most beneficial (Martinez, 2014). Based upon the study findings the best practices for providing transition services and supports to Latina high school students involve encouragement, early information, individual assistance, admissions exam preparation, and outreach.

Conclusions

This sequential explanatory mixed methods study has resulted in many findings, but the researcher will address the conclusions that are from these findings. The conclusions are as follows:

1) The educational pipeline to higher education continues to be broken for Latina students in Georgia. School-based barriers continue to limit their access to higher education. Latinas must overcome financial and informational barriers while dealing with the forces of racial discrimination.
2) Latinas continue to deal with the same barriers to college access that have persisted for Latinas/os for over 40 years.

3) Schools need to do much more to help Latina high school students transition to higher education. Latina study participants remain at a disadvantage for receiving college information and assistance despite taking rigorous academic courses (i.e., AP, gifted, etc.) and participating in extracurricular activities during high school.

Implications for Conceptual Frameworks

The use of LatCrit and the community cultural wealth model were beneficial for interpreting the data in the study. Latino critical race theory was instrumental for helping the researcher identify the presence or absence of racial discrimination as a barrier to higher education. In contrast, the community cultural wealth model helped identify the forms of cultural capital that helped Latina high students transition to higher education while also revealing the wealth in the Latina/o culture. Consistent with prior research, this study found that Latinas had very little social capital to help them get to college, but the wealth in their cultural capital was pivotal to their college access. As indicated by the study findings, Latina study participants utilized supports from home and school, and little to no support was received outside of these venues. Little college information resulted from social interactions such as extracurricular activities, volunteerism, college support, and church attendance.

However, the internet was very beneficial to Latinas for acquiring information about college and financial aid. The theoretical lens nor the conceptual framework were equipped to interpret this finding. The prominence of the internet as a source of transition support and services may warrant a blending of the theoretical frameworks so to meld social capital and cultural capital to recognize the internet's theoretical placement. The convergence or synergy created by the intersection of social capital,

cultural capital, and the internet would provide a more holistic view of how all of these variables work together to help Latina high school students transition to higher education. A theoretical framework that takes this approach may be more beneficial to understand how different factors intersect to create the right balance of services and supports needed by Latinas in order to attend college.

Recommendations for Policy Changes

In order to increase college access for Latina high school students in Georgia, a change in current state laws and policies must be made. Since the state is required to make an investment into the education of all Latinas/os at the P-12 level as required by *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), then it only makes sense that they get a return on it by allowing them access to higher education. The researcher recommends that Georgia open access to its colleges and universities for undocumented Latinas/os who graduated from high schools in the state.

The repeal of SB 492 (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014; Erisman & Looney, 2007) would remove the financial burden of paying out-of-state tuition, which would make attending college more affordable for undocumented Latinas/os. Ultimately, Georgia's Latina/o population and its economy would benefit from the state adopting a DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act in order create a pathway to citizenship. It would allow for upward social mobility for the Latina/o population while increasing the state's tax revenue and adding skilled workers to Georgia's workforce in order to better compete in the global market. In light of the current anti-immigrant sentiment in Georgia, policy change will be dependent upon whether the state legislature and other stakeholders have the political will to repeal SB

492 and pass a DREAM Act in order to equalize access to higher education for all of Georgia's Latina/o high school graduates.

Recommendations for Schools

The findings from this mixed methods study have implications for changes in practice. In order to help Latina high school students in Georgia transition to higher education there must be a change in practice at the middle, secondary, and postsecondary levels of education. The implications for each level will be addressed separately.

Cultural Diversity Training. Counselors, teachers, and other institutional agents would benefit from cultural diversity training to help them to better address Latinas/os and racial/ethnic groups that are different from their own, especially groups that are the minority in the student population. These individuals would best benefit Latinas and other underrepresented racial/ethnic groups by having an awareness of the specific transition needs associated with each group. It is also important that institutional agents learn how to effectively communicate with Latina/o parents/guardians as major stakeholders in their children's education. Parents/guardians are catalysts for Latinas' college attendance.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices. In order to provide effective instruction and equitable learning experiences for diverse students, teachers should practice culturally responsive teaching (Huerta & Brittain, 2010). Culturally responsive teaching surpasses the understanding of diverse groups, which is consistent with cultural diversity training, but also embraces and respects those cultures in the classroom. It is important that teachers have an awareness of the cultural history, lived experience, and inequalities that are common to Latinas and other diverse groups (Huerta & Brittain,

2010). The prior knowledge of diverse student groups is considered when planning for lessons and activities. Culturally responsive teachers have a realization and acceptance of their moral responsibility to prepare all students for high academic achievement within and beyond their classrooms. A school full of culturally responsive teachers produces a school culture and climate that respects all individuals and promotes academic achievement and career readiness for all. Instruction on becoming a culturally responsive teacher should begin during teacher preparation programs, but should be an on-ongoing learning process facilitated through regular professional development.

Middle School

Career Development. At the middle school level it is paramount that students receive career development experiences in order to help students begin connecting their education with career goals and aspirations. Middle school students would benefit from first gaining an awareness of different careers and the college admission requirements associated with careers. Middle schools should also expose students to different careers by inviting professionals to speak, developing mentor programs, implementing field trip opportunities, and providing exposure through academic and elective courses. Career development experiences would benefit all students by facilitating the development of career aspirations and long-term education planning.

Rigorous Course Academics. Latina students at the middle school level would benefit from access to rigorous or advanced academic course offerings. Teachers should take the opportunity to accelerate all students. Academic placement in high school is based on academic performance or programming at the middle school level. Latina middle school students who have not been identified for gifted or advance level courses

are less likely to gain access to AP/PreAP and other advanced programming during high school. More Latinas need to be given the opportunity for rigorous academics, which better prepares them for high school and beyond.

Secondary

Advanced Course Programming Access. High schools would best benefit Latina students by opening access to advance courses for this group. The majority of the Latina study participants had participated in AP/PreAP courses and less than 25% represented students who received a college prep curriculum alone. Consistent with prior research, advanced course-taking increases Latinas' chances of reaching higher education which is demonstrated by the study sample (González et al., 2003). Giving Latinas the opportunity to be placed in rigorous academic programming better prepares them for college coursework (Cavazos & Cavazos, 2010; Welton & Martinez, 2014). Latinas/os continue to be underrepresented in AP/PreAP coursework and creating better access to such programs will better help them transition to higher education.

Teachers. Teachers often serve as key sources of college information and assistance for Latina high school students in lieu of the guidance counselor. It is paramount that teachers use culturally relevant practices in their classrooms and create an environment in which all students are respected regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Teachers already have many duties, but it is important that all teachers encourage their students to attend an institution of higher education after high school. Though teachers have limited time they have the potential to act as a bridge, advocate, or facilitator for helping Latinas gain information about college admissions requirements, financial aid, and scholarships.

Counselors. At the high school level guidance counselors have been tasked with helping students graduate and then move on to higher education. High student-to-counselor ratios make it difficult for counselors to be effective for students, especially Latinas, but this issue has not been resolved despite its existence since the 1970s (Bedolla, 2010; Contreras, 2011; Martinez, 2014; McDonough, 2005; Perna & Kurban, 2013; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; U.S. Civil Rights Commission, 1974; Vela-Gude et al., 2009). Despite the American School Counselor's Association's (2012) cry for lower student-to-counselor ratios, high student caseloads and extra duties have continued to hamper the effectiveness of high school counselors and has become a normality for their function within public high schools in Georgia and throughout the United States. The large number of students that each counselor serves has not changed, so it is necessary that counselors seek innovative approaches in order to have the time to provide individual personal counseling thus meeting the needs of the students who depend on them.

Based upon study findings, counselors regularly disseminated college information in large groups or in the form of information packets. This practice may be practical and efficient, but it is not effective for helping student groups that are underrepresented at the collegiate level. These students need the individual assistance of their high school counselors the most. New practices that allow for individual or small group assistance should be considered to improve the counselor function.

The researcher recommends that high school counselors facilitate opportunities for Latinas to receive college information and assistance by forming partnerships with outside resources, organizations, and local institutions of higher education. These outside organizations may be able to provide mentors, speakers, or hold information sessions

about college that can help Latinas and their parents/guardians. Bridging, or connecting Latinas with resources or others that can help them is consistent with one of Stanton-Salazar's six forms of institutional support (2001). Providing assistance does not always mean that you are the direct provider, but it is just as beneficial to serve as a liaison that facilitated the assistance.

Administrators. Furthermore, administrators must be cognizant of the fact that being a counselor is not a miscellaneous job role. The counselor's role in schools involves duties that were not originally intended and varies based on administration and the needs of the school. Clear duties and roles for counselors must be defined in order for the college transition needs of students to be met. It is paramount that counselors and administrators re-evaluate counselor practices, roles, and their effectiveness.

High schools need to address the need for more counselors so that they can be more effective in their roles, which helps provide better support for students. High school administrators should place the need for more counselors on their school improvement plan. Latinas and other groups who lack information about the transition process suffer the most as a result of counselor ineffectiveness. The lack of counselor assistance in the transition process continues the historical pattern of institutional neglect and is symbolic of the gaping hole in the educational pipeline for Latinas.

District. School systems should make providing transition services and supports to Latinas/os and other underserved racial/ethnic groups a priority. Furthermore, systems should examine the role of their high school counselors and evaluate whether their assigned duties and student caseload inhibit their effectiveness for meeting the needs of

all students. Systems should secure funding for more counselors in their high schools. The student-to-counselor ratio must be decreased.

Higher Education

The study found that few Latinas received assistance from their current college/university and those who did were mainly provided with information in form of basic mailings, e-mails, college visits and college recruiters. The researcher recommends that institutions of higher education in Georgia should make directed efforts to recruit Latina/o high school students. These efforts could also be facilitated through mentorship programs, summer programs, or college preparation programs, which may be eligible for support through federal funding.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study provided a description of how Latina high school students in Georgia are reaching higher education. The study found that Latinas were provided with little to no social capital from institutional agents. The cultural capital of Latina study participants was found to be instrumental for their transition to higher education, and best practices were proposed as recommended by the participants. This study revealed a great deal of information about the Latina transition experience from high school to higher education, and it also revealed questions that have yet to be answered.

The research questions in this mixed methods study were answered, but there is still a need for more research to inquire about Latina access to higher education in the state. The Latina/o population continues to rapidly grow in the state of Georgia and in its public schools, but little has been done to bridge the college access gap for the group. Again, more research is needed to further support this study's findings as well as add to

the limited body of knowledge on Latina college access in the state. Furthermore, continued research on Latina college access will create an awareness that will hopefully lead to beneficial changes to educational practices in the state. The researcher recommends that further research be conducted in the following areas:

1) Over two-thirds of the survey participants in the study had participated in AP/PreAP academic programming. The researcher recommends that research be conducted to explore the transition experiences of Latina undergraduates who did not participate in AP, gifted/talented, or honors academic programming. This would allow a comparison of the transition experiences of Latinas who received advanced academic programming and those who did not receive such programming. What is the high school to college transition experience like for Latinas who do not participate in AP, gifted/talented, or honors classes?
2) The study was only conducted with Latinas (females). The researcher recommends that the quantitative phase of this study be repeated with Latino (males) undergraduates in Georgia in order to investigate their transition experiences. What is the transition experience like for Latinos in light of the fact that Latinas are attending college at much higher rates? What forms of social and cultural capital did Latinos use to transition from high school to higher education?
3) As part of the social justice tenet of LatCrit, the researcher recommends that a focus group study be conducted at more colleges/universities across the state of Georgia in order to give voice to Latinas, and to further explore their transition experience from high school to higher education. The recommended study should also be conducted separately with Latinos.

4) The researcher recommends that further research be conducted with public high school counselors across Georgia in order to gain their perception on Latina college attendance and the adequacy of the services provided for meeting Latina high school students' college transition needs. How do counselors perceive Latina/o students? Are counselors aware of the transition needs of Latina/o high school students? What types of services do they provide to help Latina/o students transition from high school to college?
5) The researcher recommends that research be conducted to investigate the role of non-specialized teachers in the college transition of Latinas. The majority of the survey participants took AP/PreAP courses during high school. Are non-specialized teachers helpful to Latinas for getting into college? Are regular academic teachers who are not a part of advanced placement or gifted programming helpful to Latinas for getting into college?
6) The researcher recommends that this study be repeated with Latina undergraduates who did not participate in any advanced programs, special programs, or ESOL during high school to investigate whether their transition experience and the forms of social and cultural capital used are comparable to those of this initial study.
7) The researcher recommends that research be conducted with Latina high school graduates who did not attend college to investigate factors and experiences that prevented their transition to higher education.
8) The study revealed that Latinas relied on the internet to search for information about college requirements and considered it more helpful than their high school

counselor and teachers. The study was not designed to investigate internet usage beyond what was found. The researcher recommends that research be conducted in order to investigate the magnitude of the internet's role in Latinas' transition from high school to higher education.

9) The researcher recommends that research be conducted to investigate the role of early college and dual enrollment programs in helping Latinas transition to higher education.
10) The researcher recommends that that the quantitative phase of this study be repeated with Latina undergraduate students at both public and private institutions of higher education throughout Georgia. This will allow further investigation into Latinas' transition experience with a larger population sample, which will provide support for the findings in the current study and serve to increase the generalizability of the results.
11) The researcher recommends that research be conducted to address discrimination amongst Latinas/os for students who excel academically in high school.
12) The researcher recommends that research be conducted to determine the impact of school demographics on students' educational experiences.

Limitations

The external validity of this study is strong due to the number of total participants and their representation of different high school locations throughout Georgia. The 502 study participants provided a good geographic representation of Latina high school graduates from 71 counties across the state. The study findings can be generalized to Latina high school graduates in Georgia who transitioned into 2-year or 4-year

institutions of higher education. However, one limitation of the external validity of this study is due to the lack of a comparison group of Latina high school graduates who did not attend higher education.

Final Significance

The problem of this study was that little attention has been given to helping Latina high school students in Georgia reach higher education. The purpose of the study was to describe best practices for helping Latina high school graduates transition to higher education. The study also aimed to gain insight on their transition experience by identifying the forms of social and cultural capital that Latina high school students used to reach higher education while also identifying barriers to their access.

The findings from this study defied cultural deficit thinking by revealing that Latinas study participants had high aspirations for college and they made their own way to college with major support from their parents/guardians. However, the information and assistance that Latinas received from institutional agents was disproportionate to what was truly available. Very little college information or assistance was provided by institutional agents.

In order to prepare *all* students for careers of the future *all* students must be educated, informed, and provided with adequate information to do so. Georgia and the larger U.S. have experienced continued growth in their Latina/o populations. In response to this growth, legislation at the state level and policies at the higher education level have been established to limit their access to higher education. Many barriers have been constructed, but what will be done in the state of Georgia to build a bridge to higher education for Latinas/os? Based upon the needs and best practices proposed by Latinas

themselves, high schools need to make targeted efforts to help them get into college. Latinas make up the fastest growing racial/ethnic group of females in the country, which makes it a matter of necessity that institutional agents and policymakers revisit their policies and practices for how they address this group. Failing to help Latinas access higher education has the potential to negatively impact the social and economic well-being of this group, the state of Georgia, and the United States as a whole.

The Complete College Georgia initiative was established in 2011 by Governor Nathan Deal (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2011) to promote college access in order to create an educated workforce to meet Georgia's future job needs that will require college educated workers. One of the initiative's aims is to provide college access for underrepresented student groups in Georgia by promoting college readiness as a way to "mend the pipeline" (Board of Regents, n.d.). The Georgia Department of Education has also adopted the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) to measure how well K-12 public schools are preparing students for higher education and the workforce. The fact that these initiatives and accountability measures have been put into place does not mean that Latina college access will increase. There must be action taken to make these initiatives work for all students; especially Latinas/os in the state. This research study provides a list of best practices for schools and policy-makers to enhance Latina high school graduates' transition to higher education. Stakeholders and schools must have the institutional will to support college readiness and college access for Latinas, which will also benefit the state of Georgia.

Furthermore, the decisions that we make today either lead to progress or problems for the generations of tomorrow. Taking action to increase college access for young

Latinas today can mean years of progress for future generations of Latinas/os. The findings from this research brings awareness to the "how" and "why" of the underrepresentation of Latinas in higher education and offers solutions to the problem. The reality is that the findings and recommendations posed by this research study mean nothing if action is not taken to change the transition situation for Latinas in the state of Georgia.

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APPENDIX A:

Institutional Review Board Approvals

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-03182-2015 **INVESTIGATOR:** Treva Gear

PROJECT TITLE: Identifying Best Practices for Facilitating Access to Higher Education for Latina high School Students in Georgia

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is exempt from Institutional Review Board oversight under Exemption Category(ies) :2. You may begin your study immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS:

Although not a requirement for exemption, the following suggestions are offered by the IRB Administrator to enhance the protection of participants and/or strengthen the research proposal:

NONE

☐ If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.

Elizabeth W. Olphie 3/2/15
Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator Date

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.

Revised: 12.13.12

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College
Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants
PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: Gear_06_08_2015 **Investigator:** Treva Y Gear

Project Title: Identifying Best Practices for Facilitating Access to Higher Education for Latina high school students

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Institutional Review Board Determination: This research is EXEMPT from Institutional Review Board oversight under Exemption Category 2. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator before continuing your research.

Additional Comments/Suggestions: Please contact the IRB Administrator @ bmccorvey@abac.edu for assistance in securing approval to identify and/or contact ABAC students from the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Director of Multi-Cultural Education.

Betty S. McCorvey

Betty S. McCorvey, Chairman **Date** 7/13/2015

Thank you for submitting an IRB application. Please direct questions to bmccorvey@abac.edu or 229.391.4896.

College of Coastal Georgia
Institutional Review Board

Ms. Treva Gear
tygear@valdosta.edu

29 June 2015

Dear Ms. Gear,

The IRB has reviewed your request for permission to collect data from our student for an investigation entitled "Identifying Best Practices for Facilitating Access to Higher Education for Latina High School Students in Georgia" (CCGA IRB #201541; Valdosta IRB #03182-2015). In accordance with the U.S. Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) Guidance on Engagement of Institutions in Human Subjects Research the proposed protocol falls into the category of "Institutions (e.g., schools, nursing homes, businesses) that permit use of their facilities for intervention or interaction with subjects by investigators from another institution for research purposes" (http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/engage08.html). In that the IRB of the primary institution, the Valdosta University has approved this investigation, the CCGA IRB has determined that the College of Coastal Georgia is "not engaged" in this research and thus, our IRB approval is not required. However, Dr. Keith Belcher, Dean of Arts and Sciences, and FWA designee for the College has given administrative approval for Ms. Gear to conduct this research on our campus.

Please find attached the CCGA policy on Inter-institutional research and submit a completed Application for Inter-institutional Research for documentation purposes.

Please note that any substantive changes to the protocol may alter its status, and a request for changes should be submitted for IRB review prior to implementation of any changes in research protocol or investigators that would result in CCGA being "engaged" according to the OHRP guidance above.

I appreciate the opportunity to review this research. Please contact me if you have questions regarding this response.

Sincerely,

M. Karen Hambright

Karen Hambright, Ph.D., Chair
College of Coastal Georgia IRB

Cc: Dean Keith Belcher; Dr. Jennifer Pooler Gray, Vice Chair CCGA IRB; Ms. Connie Hiott, IRB Administrator

Outside Agency Approval Protocol IRB-03182-2015
CSU IRB <irb@columbusstate.edu>
Tue 6/23/2015 3:34 PM
Inbox
To: Treva Y Gear <tygear@valdosta.edu>;

Institutional Review Board

Columbus State University

Date: 6/23/15

Protocol Number: IRB-03182-2015 (Valdosta State University)

Protocol Title: Identifying Best Practices for Facilitating Access to Higher Education for Latina High School Students in Georgia

Principal Investigator: Treva Gear

Co-Principal Investigator: n/a

Dear Treva Gear:

A representative of the Columbus State University (CSU) Institutional Reviewed Board has reviewed your human research proposal identified above. The project has been previously approved by the IRB at Valdosta State University and classified as exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations. As such, permission to conduct the research project at CSU as outlined in the application is granted for one (1) year from the date of this letter.

Please note any changes to the protocol must be submitted in writing to the IRB before implementing the change(s). Any adverse events, unexpected problems, and/or incidents that involve risks to participants and/or others must be reported to the Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu or (706) 507-8634.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact the IRB.

Sincerely,

Amber Dees, IRB Coordinator
Institutional Review Board
Columbus State University

IRB Approval - Dalton State College

Andy Meyer <ameyer@daltonstate.edu>

Mon 7/6/2015 4:51 PM

To:Reynaldo L Martinez <rlmartinez@valdosta.edu>; Treva Y Gear <tygear@valdosta.edu>;

Cc:Jodi Smith Johnson <jjohnson@daltonstate.edu>;

Greetings Dr. Martinez and Ms. Gear,

I have reviewed your proposal entitled "Identifying Best Practices for Facilitating Access to Higher Education for Latina High School Graduates in Georgia" and found that is has met the criteria for exemption from IRB review. You are approved to proceed as proposed. I wish you the best in your studies.

Sincerely,

Andy Meyer, PhD
Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dalton State College

Institutional Review Board

Office of Academic Affairs

irb@gcsu.edu

http://www.gcsu.edu/irb

DATE: 2015-07-20

TO: Treva Yulonda Gear

FROM: Tsu-Ming Chiang, Ph.D. Chair of Georgia College Institution Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: #2297 Identifying Best Practices for Facilitating Access to Higher Education for Latina High School Students in Georgia

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: 2015-07-20

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exempt

Thank you for submitting an application to the Georgia College IRB for the above-referenced project. Based on the information you provided in your submission, IRB has determined that your project involving human subjects qualifies for EXEMPT status under 45CFR 46.101(b) (1)-(6).

Assignment of exempt status to this project means that this project is exempt from further IRB review. This exempt status is valid unless substantive revisions to the study design occur which would alter the risk to participants. If a substantive change is anticipated, you may submit an extension/modification form detailing these changes. Please consult the GC IRB if you have a question about a potential change to your exempt study.

Please note that all responsibilities required of conducting human subject research still apply to this project. Specifically, the Belmont Report principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice apply, and all investigators involved in this project must have and maintain current/valid certification of training with conducting research with human subjects

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact irb@gcsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Georgia College IRB's records.

Finally, on behalf of IRB, we would appreciate your time to fill out a short survey (click the link below) to provide us with feedback. Best wishes for your study.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1iWX9nbq2kyxlLaT8P6vLstQB1LriGl_GrqNSXXafT2k/viewform?c=0&w=1&usp=mail_form_link

Sincerely,

Tsu-Ming Chiang, Ph.D.

Georgia Gwinnett COLLEGE

Institutional Review Board Memorandum of Approval

TO: Treva Gear
FROM: Dr. Tirza Leader, IRB Chair
RE: IRB Proposal # 15004
DATE: June 18, 2015

Committee Action: Expedited Review
Study Title:
Identifying Best Practices for Facilitating Access to Higher Education for Latina high School Students in Georgia

Your proposal has been reviewed under the expedited review process detailed in the policies and procedures of the Institutional Review Board.

I am pleased to inform you that your proposal has been approved. This approval is effective for 12 months. Should your research continue beyond 12 months from this date, you will be required to request and receive continuing approval.

The approved procedure is as follows:

- Recruit GGC students for participation in an on-line study through the student e-mail list serve.

Renewal: It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date. Failure to renew your study before the expiration date will result in termination of the study and suspension of related research grants.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Chair within 48 hours.

Amendments: Any changes to the protocol, including changes in the research design, equipment, personnel, or funding, must be approved by the IRB committee before they can be initiated.

Personnel: Study personnel must complete training in human subject research. Training can be completed through the NIH or CITI. See the IRB website for details. http://www.ggc.edu/faculty-and-staff/irb/

You are required to maintain all consent forms in a secure location and to provide a final report of the research to the IRB upon completion of the project.

Re: Request to Conduct Research

Diane Langston <dlangston@highlands.edu>

Thu 7/23/2015 12:04 PM

To:Treva Y Gear <tygear@valdosta.edu>;

Hi. Your proposal is approved. Do you need a letter from me stating that? Or will this e-mail suffice?

From: Treva Y Gear <tygear@valdosta.edu>
Sent: Thursday, July 23, 2015 10:59 AM
To: Diane Langston
Subject: Re: Request to Conduct Research

Good Morning Dr. Langston,

Thanks for the update. I am following up with you as directed. It is good to know that many individuals on the board responded positively. Thank you for your assistance in this process. I look forward to hearing the board's decision.

Thank you,
Treva Gear
Doctoral Candidate
Valdosta State University
(229) 630-7752

Office of the Vice President for Research
and Dean of the Graduate College

Treva Gear
Doctoral Candidate
Valdosta State University
(229) 630-7752

Dear Ms. Gear,

The Kennesaw State University (KSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) has administratively examined your study materials for Identifying Best Practices for Facilitating Access to Higher Education for Latina high School Students in Georgia that were reviewed and approved by the Valdosta State University IRB (IRB-03182-2015). You are granted permission to recruit participants for this research on the KSU campus from July 14, 2015 through July 13, 2016.

Ms. Zelda Ray, the Enrollment Services Specialist for the RRPG program for Hispanic and Latino students, has agreed to assist you in disseminating information regarding your study. All recruitment efforts are to be coordinated through Ms. Ray. She will guide through the KSU policy on mass emailing.

Please note that permission to recruit is not an IRB review, and applying to recruit does not serve as or replace review by an IRB. The Valdosta State University IRB retains responsibility for conducting all required continuing reviews of the study, and all unanticipated problems or adverse events related to the study must be reported to the home IRB. Should the study receive a continuing review or be submitted to the home IRB for review and approval of study revisions, you must reapply for permission to recruit research participants at KSU. This is accomplished through submission of copies of revised documents, including the most recent approval documents. Following assessment of these documents, a subsequent letter of permission to recruit may be issued.

Should you have questions, please contact the board by email at irb@kennesaw.edu.

Sincerely,

Christine Ziegler, Ph. D.

Chair, KSU Institutional Review Board
Office of Research | Kennesaw State University
Main Line: 770.423.6738
irb@kennesaw.edu | http://www.kennesaw.edu/irb

SGSC IRB Approval

Frank Holiwski <Frank.Holiwski@sgsc.edu>

Tue 7/28/2015 11:18 AM

To:Treva Y Gear <tygear@valdosta.edu>;

Hi,

My name is Frank Holiwski and I am the Chair of the SGSC IRB. It recently came to my attention that you had requested IRB approval to access some information pertaining to SGSC students. I am aware that your research has already been approved as exempt by the VSU IRB and based on the documents you sent, I (and another SGSC IRB member) concur. Therefore please consider this the official approval of the SGSC IRB. I would be happy to send you a hard copy approval with SGSC letterhead if you provide me an address.

Sorry for the delay, but please feel free to send any future correspondence directly to me.

Yours,
Frank Holiwski

APPENDIX B:

Pilot Study Phone Interview Question

Pilot Study: Phone Interview Questions

Date: _____ Participant: _____

GMC Site: _____ Time to Complete Survey: _____

1) How would you describe the length of the survey?
    a. Was it too long? YES or NO
    b. Did you ever feel like stopping the survey?

2) Did you understand the instructions? YES or NO
3) Did you find any questions confusing? YES or NO
    a. If so, which ones? Do you remember them? (We will go over them)
4) Did the questions make sense? Were they clear? YES or NO
5) Did any of the questions make you feel uncomfortable? YES or NO
    a. If so, which ones?
    b. How did you feel about being asked about where you were born?
    c. How did you feel about the racial discrimination questions? Should I have asked the questions in another way?
6) Did any of the questions offend you? YES or NO
    a. If so, which ones?
7) How was the overall survey experience? Good Bad Okay
    a. Explain:
8) How could I make this survey better?
    a. What questions should I or could I ask that might give me a better idea of what helped you reach college?

b. What questions could I have asked to find out what you needed more help with in your transition to college?

c. Are there questions that you wish I would have asked you?

APPENDIX C:

Latina/o Social and Cultural Capital Questionnaire (LSCQ)

Latina Social and Cultural Capital Questionnaire (LSCQ)

Q1 You are being asked to participate in a survey research project entitled, Identifying Best Practices for Facilitating Access to Higher Education for Latina High School Students in Georgia, which is being conducted by Treva Gear, a student at Valdosta State University. This survey is anonymous. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in the study. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older. Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Treva Gear at (229) 630-7752 or tygear@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (229) 259-5045 or irb@valdosta.edu.

❍ I agree to participate. (1)

Q2 What is your age?
❍ 18 (1)
❍ 19 (2)
❍ 20 (3)
❍ 21 (4)
❍ 22 (5)
❍ 23 (6)
❍ 24 (7)
❍ 25 (8)
❍ 26 (9)
❍ 27 (10)
❍ 28 (11)
❍ 29 (12)
❍ 30 (13)
❍ 31 (14)
❍ 32 (15)
❍ 33 (16)
❍ 34 (17)
❍ 35 (18)
❍ 36 (19)
❍ 37 (20)
❍ 38 (21)

- 39 (22)
- 40 (23)
- 41 (24)
- 42 (25)
- 43 (26)
- 44 (27)
- 45 (28)
- 46 (29)
- 47 (30)
- 48 (31)
- 49 (32)
- 50 (33)
- 51 (34)
- 52 (35)
- 53 (36)
- 54 (37)
- 55 (38)
- 56 (39)
- 57 (40)
- 58 (41)
- 59 (42)
- 60 (43)
- 61 (44)
- 62 (45)
- 63 (46)
- 64 (47)
- 65 (48)

If 17 Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey If 16 Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q3 What is your gender?
- Female (1)
- Male (2)

If Male Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?
- Latino/Hispanic (1)
- White (2)
- African American (3)
- American Indian or Alaskan Native (4)
- Asian or Pacific Islander (5)

If Latino/Hispanic Is Not Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q5 Did you graduate from a high school in the state of Georgia?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)
- ❍ Did not graduate from high school. Received a GED. (3)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Answer If Did you graduate from a high school in the state of Georgia? Did not graduate from high school. Received a GED. Is Selected

Q6 Did you last attend a high school in Georgia before receiving your GED?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q7 What is your college status?

- ❍ Freshman (1)
- ❍ Sophomore (2)
- ❍ Junior (3)
- ❍ Senior (4)
- ❍ Graduate school (i.e., masters, specialist, doctorate, etc.) (5)

If Graduate school (i.e., mast... Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Answer If Did you graduate from a high school in the state of Georgia? Yes Is Selected

Q8 What year did you graduate from high school?

- ❍ 1996 (1)
- ❍ 1997 (2)
- ❍ 1998 (3)
- ❍ 1999 (4)
- ❍ 2000 (5)
- ❍ 2001 (6)
- ❍ 2002 (7)
- ❍ 2003 (8)
- ❍ 2004 (9)
- ❍ 2005 (10)
- ❍ 2006 (11)
- ❍ 2007 (12)
- ❍ 2008 (13)
- ❍ 2009 (14)
- ❍ 2010 (15)
- ❍ 2011 (16)
- ❍ 2012 (17)

- ❍ 2013 (18)
- ❍ 2014 (19)
- ❍ 2015 (20)

Answer If Did you last attend a high school in Georgia before receiving your GED? Yes Is Selected

Q9 What year did you get your GED?

- ❍ 1996 (1)
- ❍ 1997 (2)
- ❍ 1998 (3)
- ❍ 1999 (4)
- ❍ 2000 (5)
- ❍ 2001 (6)
- ❍ 2002 (7)
- ❍ 2003 (8)
- ❍ 2004 (9)
- ❍ 2005 (10)
- ❍ 2006 (11)
- ❍ 2007 (12)
- ❍ 2008 (13)
- ❍ 2009 (14)
- ❍ 2010 (15)
- ❍ 2011 (16)
- ❍ 2012 (17)
- ❍ 2013 (18)
- ❍ 2014 (19)
- ❍ 2015 (20)

Answer If Did you graduate from a high school in the state of Georgia? Yes Is Selected

Q10 Which high school in Georgia did you graduate from?

Q11 What type of high school did you graduate from?

- ❍ Public high school (1)
- ❍ Magnet school (2)
- ❍ Private religious/parochial school (3)
- ❍ Private college-prep school (4)
- ❍ Home school (5)
- ❍ GED (General Education Diploma) (6)

Q12 What is the name of the college/university that you are currently enrolled?
- ❍ Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (1)
- ❍ Armstrong Atlantic University (2)
- ❍ College of Coastal Georgia (3)
- ❍ Columbus State University (4)
- ❍ Dalton State College (5)
- ❍ Georgia Gwinnett College (6)
- ❍ Georgia Institute of Technology (7)
- ❍ Georgia College and State University (8)
- ❍ Georgia Highlands College (9)
- ❍ Georgia Perimeter College (10)
- ❍ Georgia Southern University (11)
- ❍ Georgia State University (12)
- ❍ Kennesaw State University (13)
- ❍ South Georgia College (14)
- ❍ University of Georgia (15)
- ❍ University of North Georgia (16)
- ❍ University of West Georgia (17)
- ❍ Valdosta State University (18)

Q13 What types of financial assistance did you receive to help you with the cost of first attending college? (Select all that apply)
- ❑ Pell Grant (1)
- ❑ HOPE scholarship (2)
- ❑ Other Scholarships (3)
- ❑ Student Loans (4)
- ❑ Parents/Family (5)
- ❑ Self-payment (6)

Q14 What is the highest academic degree that you would like to obtain?
- ❍ Associates degree (A.A.) (1)
- ❍ Bachelors degree (B.A., B.S., etc.) (2)
- ❍ Masters degree (M.A., M.S., etc.) (3)
- ❍ Ph.D. or Ed.D. (Doctorate) (4)
- ❍ M.D., D.O., D.D.S, or D.V.M. (Medicine) (5)
- ❍ J.D. (Law) (6)
- ❍ B.D. or M.DIV. (Divinity) (7)

Q15 When did you first decide that you wanted to go to college?
- I have always wanted to go to college (1)
- Elementary/primary school (2)
- Middle school (3)
- High school (4)

Answer If When did you first decided that you wanted to go to college? High school Is Selected

Q16 What grade in high school were you in when you decided to go to college?
- 9th (1)
- 10th (2)
- 11th (3)
- 12th (4)

Q17 Who or what led to your desire to attend college? (Limit response to 300 words or less.)

Q18 What is your family's country of origin?
- Mexico (1)
- Dominican Republic (2)
- Puerto Rico (3)
- Guatemala (4)
- El Salvador (5)
- Cuba (6)
- Other (7) _____

Q19 What is your place of birth?
- United States (1)
- Mexico (2)
- Puerto Rico (3)
- Guatemala (4)
- Dominican Republic (5)
- El Salvador (6)
- Cuba (7)
- Other (8) _____

Q20 Please select the highest level of education that your mother/female guardian and father/male guardian completed.

	Elementary/Primary (1)	Middle school/junior high (2)	Some high school (3)	High school diploma/ GED (4)	Some college (5)	Associate's degree (6)	Bachelors degree (7)	Graduate degree or higher (8)	Don't know (9)
Mother/female guardian (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Father/male guardian (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q21 Are you the first person in your family to go to college?
- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q22 Did your current college provide any assistance that helped you to attend their college?
- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Answer If Did the college you are currently attending play a role in helping you attend their college? Yes Is Selected

Q23 How did they help you? (Select all that apply.)
- ❑ Mailings (1)
- ❑ Recruiter phone calls (2)
- ❑ College visitation days (3)
- ❑ Recruiter visits to high school (4)
- ❑ Recruiter visits to your home (5)
- ❑ Assistance filling out college application (6)
- ❑ Assistance filling out financial aid paperwork (7)
- ❑ Other (8) _____

Q24 Did another college provide assistance that helped you attend college?
- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Answer If Did another college play a role in helping you attend college? Yes Is Selected

Q25 How did another college help you? (Select all that apply.)

- ❑ Mailings (1)
- ❑ Recruiter phone calls (2)
- ❑ College visitation days (3)
- ❑ Recruiter visits to high school (4)
- ❑ Recruiter visits to your home (5)
- ❑ Assistance filling out college application (6)
- ❑ Assistance filling out financial aid paperwork (7)
- ❑ Other (8) _____

Q26 During high school, especially during your senior year, how many times did your high school guidance counselor talk with you or assist you with the following:

	Never (1)	At least once (2)	Twice (3)	Three Times or More (4)
High school course selections (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Career/job selection for future (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Long-term education plans (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Signing up for the SAT or ACT (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Fee waiver for SAT or ACT (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Choosing a college (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍
College applications (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Applying for financial aid/filling out FAFSA (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Requesting letters of recommendation (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Writing essays for college applications (10)	❍	❍	❍	❍
Scholarships (11)	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q27 Did your high school counselor provide you with one-on-one, individualized college information?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q28 During high school, especially during your senior year, did any guidance counselor encourage or discourage you about

	Encouraged me (1)	Did not say anything (2)	Discouraged me (3)
Going to a 2-yr community college (1)	❍	❍	❍
Going to a 4-yr university (2)	❍	❍	❍
Going to a technical/vocational college (3)	❍	❍	❍
Entering the military (4)	❍	❍	❍
Getting a job after graduation (5)	❍	❍	❍

Q29 During high school, especially during your senior year, did any of your high school teachers encourage or discourage you about

	Encouraged me (1)	Did not say anything (2)	Discouraged me (3)
Going to a 2-yr community college (1)	❍	❍	❍
Going to a 4-yr university (2)	❍	❍	❍
Going to a technical/vocational college (3)	❍	❍	❍
Entering the military (4)	❍	❍	❍
Getting a job after graduation (5)	❍	❍	❍

Q30 Who provided the most help with the application process that led to your college admission? (Select all that apply.)

- ❑ High school counselor (1)
- ❑ Principal or Assistant Principal (2)
- ❑ Teacher (3)
- ❑ Sports coach (4)
- ❑ Club advisor (5)
- ❑ Parents/Guardians (6)
- ❑ Brother/Sister (7)
- ❑ Relatives (i.e., aunt, uncle, cousins, grandparents, etc.) (8)
- ❑ Friend (9)
- ❑ Classmate(s) (10)
- ❑ Mentor (11)
- ❑ College preparatory program (i.e., Upward Bound, DREAM, GEAR Up, etc.) (12)
- ❑ College recruiter(s) (13)
- ❑ Migrant education counselor (14)
- ❑ Other (15) _____
- ❑ No one (16)

Q31 How did you find out about the requirements to get into college? (Select all that apply.)

- ❑ High school counselor (1)
- ❑ Principal or Assistant Principal (2)
- ❑ Teacher (3)
- ❑ Sports coach (4)
- ❑ Club advisor (5)
- ❑ Parents/guardians (6)
- ❑ Brother/Sister (7)
- ❑ Relatives (i.e., aunt, uncle, cousins, grandparents, etc.) (8)
- ❑ Friends (9)
- ❑ Classmates (10)
- ❑ College recruiter(s) (11)
- ❑ Internet (12)
- ❑ Mailings (13)
- ❑ Mentor (14)
- ❑ Migrant education counselor (15)
- ❑ I searched for information (16)
- ❑ Other (17) _____

Q32 During high school, did any of your teachers provide you with information about college (i.e., admission requirements, application help, SAT/ACT, financial aid, etc.)?

- ❍ None of them (1)
- ❍ Some of them (2)
- ❍ Most of them (3)
- ❍ All of them (4)

Q33 During high school, did you take classes in or receive services from one of the following programs? (Check all that apply)

- ❑ Advanced Placement (AP) or PreAP (1)
- ❑ Gifted/Talented program (2)
- ❑ ELL (English Language Learners) (3)
- ❑ Migrant education/services (4)
- ❑ Special education (5)
- ❑ Bilingual education (6)
- ❑ None (7)

Answer If During high school, did you participate or take classes in one of the following programs? (Check... Advanced Placement (AP) Is Selected

Q34 Did any of your AP/PreAP teachers provide you with information about college (i.e., requirements, application help, SAT/ACT, financial aid, etc.)?

- ❍ None of them (1)
- ❍ Some of them (2)
- ❍ Most of them (3)
- ❍ All of them (4)

Answer If During high school, did you participate or take classes in one of the following programs? (Check... Gifted/Talented program Is Selected

Q35 Did any of your Gifted/Talented teachers provide you with information about college (i.e., requirements, application help, SAT/ACT, financial aid, etc.)?

- ❍ None of them (1)
- ❍ Some of them (2)
- ❍ Most of them (3)
- ❍ All of them (4)

Answer If During high school, did you participate or take classes in one of the following programs? (Check... ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Is Selected

Q36 Did any of your ELL teachers provide you with information about college (i.e., requirements, application help, SAT/ACT, financial aid, etc.)?

- None of them (1)
- Some of them (2)
- Most of them (3)
- All of them (4)

Answer If During high school, did you participate or take classes in one of the following programs? (Check... Migrant education/services Is Selected

Q37 Did any of your migrant education teachers or case managers provide you with information about college (i.e., requirements, application help, SAT/ACT, financial aid, etc.)?

- None of them (1)
- Some of them (2)
- Most of them (3)
- All of them (4)

Answer If During high school, did you participate or take classes in one of the following programs? (Check... Special education Is Selected

Q38 Did any of your special education teachers provide you with information about college (i.e., requirements, application help, SAT/ACT, financial aid, etc.)?

- None of them (1)
- Some of them (2)
- Most of them (3)
- All of them (4)

Answer If During high school, did you participate or take classes in one of the following programs? (Check... Bilingual education Is Selected

Q39 Did any of your bilingual education teachers provide you with information about college (i.e., requirements, application help, SAT/ACT, financial aid, etc.)?

- None of them (1)
- Some of them (2)
- Most of them (3)
- All of them (4)

Q40 Did your high school have Latino/Hispanic student clubs/organizations?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Did your high school have Latino/Hispanic student clubs/organizations? Yes Is Selected

Q41 Were you a member of one of these Latino/Hispanic clubs/organizations?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q42 Did you participate in any extracurricular activities (i.e. sports, band, chorus, clubs, debate team, etc.) in high school?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Answer If Did you participate in any extracurricular activities (i.e. sports, band, chorus, clubs, debate team, etc.) in high school? Yes Is Selected

Q43 While participating in these activities did any fellow members, advisors, or coaches provide you with any information about college?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q44 Did you do any volunteer work in your community that was not part of your membership in an organization?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Answer If Did you do volunteer work in your community that was not part of your membership in an organization? Yes Is Selected

Q45 While volunteering did any other volunteers or volunteer organizers provide you with any information about college?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q46 Did you participate in a college preparation program in high school (i.e., Gear Up, Upward Bound, AVID, Project GRAD, etc.)?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Answer If Did you participate in a college preparation program in high school (i.e. Gear Up, Upward Bound, AVID, etc.)? Yes Is Selected

Q47 How did you find out about this college preparation program?

- ❍ High school counselor (1)
- ❍ Principal or Assistant Principal (2)
- ❍ Teacher (3)
- ❍ Club advisor (4)
- ❍ Sports coach (5)
- ❍ Parents/Guardians (6)
- ❍ Brother/Sister (7)
- ❍ Relatives (i.e., aunt, uncle, cousins, grandparents, etc.) (8)
- ❍ Friends (9)
- ❍ Classmates (10)
- ❍ Mentor (11)
- ❍ Program recruiter (12)
- ❍ Tutor (13)
- ❍ Church (14)
- ❍ Migrant education counselor (15)
- ❍ Word of mouth; heard someone talking about it (16)
- ❍ Other (17) _____
- ❍ Do not remember (18)

Q48 Did you have a mentor at any time while you were in high school?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q49 Did you participate in any summer program of any type on a college campus while in high school?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Answer If Did you participate in any summer program of any type on a college campus while in middle school or high school? Yes Is Selected

Q50 Which summer program(s) did you participate in while in high school?

Q51 Did you have any Latina/o teachers during high school?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Answer If Did you have any Latina/o teachers during high school? Yes Is Selected

Q52 Would you consider any of your Latina/o teachers to be a source of inspiration or motivation for attending college?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q53 During your senior year, did your mother/female guardian encourage or discourage you about:

	Encouraged me (1)	Did not say anything (2)	Discouraged me (3)
Going to college (2-yr or 4-yr) (1)	❍	❍	❍
Going to vocational/technical college (2)	❍	❍	❍
Entering the military service (3)	❍	❍	❍
Getting a job after graduation (4)	❍	❍	❍
Getting married and starting a family (5)	❍	❍	❍

Q54 During your senior year, did your father/male guardian encourage or discourage you about:

	Encouraged me (1)	Did not say anything (2)	Discouraged me (3)
Going to college (2-yr or 4-yr) (1)	❍	❍	❍
Going to vocational/technical college (2)	❍	❍	❍
Entering the military service (3)	❍	❍	❍
Getting a job after graduation (4)	❍	❍	❍
Getting married and starting a family (5)	❍	❍	❍

Q55 Did a friend encourage you to attend college?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Answer If Did a friend encourage you to attend college? Yes Is Selected

Q56 Did your friend also enroll in a college/university?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Answer If Did your friend also enroll in a college? Yes Is Selected

Q57 Is your friend attending the college/university that you are currently enrolled in?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q58 Who stands out in your mind as being especially helpful to you getting into college? (Select all that apply.)

- ❑ High school counselor (1)
- ❑ Principal or Assistant Principal (2)
- ❑ Teacher (3)
- ❑ Sports coach (4)
- ❑ Club advisor (5)
- ❑ Parents/Guardians (6)
- ❑ Brother/Sister (7)
- ❑ Relatives (aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, etc.) (8)
- ❑ Friend (9)
- ❑ Classmate(s) (10)
- ❑ Mentor (11)
- ❑ College preparatory program (i.e., Upward Bound, DREAM, GEAR Up, etc.) (12)
- ❑ College recruiter (13)
- ❑ Migrant education counselor (14)
- ❑ Other (15) _____
- ❑ No one was especially helpful to me. (16)

Answer If Who stands out in your mind as being especially helpful to you getting into college? No one was especially helpful to me. Is Not Selected

Q59 How did this person or organization help you get into college? They helped me with: (Select all that apply.)

- ❑ Admissions exam (SAT/ACT) registration (1)
- ❑ Meeting college requirements (2)
- ❑ Financial aid information (3)
- ❑ Assistance filling out financial aid forms (4)
- ❑ Assistance filling out college applications (5)
- ❑ Actual enrollment (6)
- ❑ Campus visits (7)
- ❑ Finding scholarships (8)
- ❑ Encouraging me to attend college (9)
- ❑ Other (10) _____

Q60 What obstacles did you face that could have prevented you from attending college? (Limit response to 300 words or less.)

Q61 What type of services would have helped you make a smoother transition from high school to college? (Select all that apply.)

- ❑ High school counselor support (1)
- ❑ Teacher support (2)
- ❑ Parent support (3)
- ❑ More info about college requirements (4)
- ❑ More info about financial aid/scholarships (5)
- ❑ More info about admissions tests (ACT/SAT/COMPASS) (6)
- ❑ Help preparing for the ACT or SAT (7)
- ❑ College visits (8)
- ❑ Mentors (9)
- ❑ Help preparing college applications (10)
- ❑ Help preparing the FAFSA and other financial aid paperwork (11)
- ❑ Other (Limit response to 100 words or less.) (12) _____

Q62 What types of services or support, if any, were most helpful to you when you were trying to get into college? (Limit response to 300 words or less.)

Q63 Did either of your parents/guardians tell you stories about their lives, family stories, or those of ancestors?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Answer If Did either of your parents tell stories of the family history? Yes Is Selected

Q64 Which parent/guardian usually told the stories?

- ❍ Mother/female guardian (1)
- ❍ Father/male guardian (2)
- ❍ Both parents/guardians (3)

Answer If Did either of your parents tell you stories about their lives, family stories, or those of ancest... Yes Is Selected

Q65 Did these family stories encourage you to attend college?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q66 While in high school and throughout your life did your parents/guardians stress the importance of any of the following? (Check all that apply.)

- ❑ Respect (respeto) (1)
- ❑ High moral values (2)
- ❑ Familioso (3)
- ❑ Integrity (4)
- ❑ Loyalty (5)
- ❑ Perseverance (6)
- ❑ Hard work (7)
- ❑ Getting a good education (8)
- ❑ Doing better than they have done (9)
- ❑ Other (10) _____

Q67 Which of the following family responsibilities did you have while you were in high school? (Select all that apply.)

- ❑ Taking care of younger brothers and/or sisters (1)
- ❑ Taking care of younger cousins or relatives (2)
- ❑ Cleaning the house (3)
- ❑ Washing household laundry (4)
- ❑ Cooking family meals (5)
- ❑ Translating for parents or other family members (6)
- ❑ Running errands that involved dropping off bill payments for parents or other family members (7)
- ❑ Providing transportation for parents or other family members (8)
- ❑ Other (9) _____

Q68 What were your parents/guardians' attitude towards the value of education?

	Very Important (1)	Important (2)	Moderately Important (3)	Of Little Importance (4)	Unimportant (5)
Mother/female guardian's attitude (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Father/male guardian's attitude (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q69 Which parent/guardian had the greatest influence on the development of your educational goals?

❍ Mother/female guardian (1)

❍ Father/male guardian (2)

Q70 Which parent/guardian had the greatest influence on family decisions?

❍ Mother/female guardian (1)

❍ Father/male guardian (2)

Q71 What advice did your parents/guardians give you for achieving your education and career goals? (Limit response to 300 words.)

Q72 Was "standing up for your rights" encouraged by either of your parents/guardians?

❍ Yes (1)

❍ No (2)

Answer If Was "standing up for your rights" encouraged by either of your parents/legal guardians? Yes Is Selected

Q73 Which parent/guardian encouraged you to "stand up for your rights"?

❍ Mother/female guardian (1)

❍ Father/male guardian (2)

❍ Both parents/guardians (3)

Q74 How would you rate your level of religiousness?

	Not Religious (1)	Somewhat Religious (2)	Very Religious (3)
Your religiousness (1)	❍	❍	❍

Q75 What is your family's level of religiousness?

	Not religious (1)	Somewhat Religious (2)	Very Religious (3)
Family's religiousness (1)	❍	❍	❍

Q76 Did you attend church during your high school years?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Answer If Did you attend church services during your high school years? Yes Is Selected

Q77 Did anyone from your church provide college information or support that was helpful to you for getting into college?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Answer If Did anyone from your church provide college preparation information or support that was helpful to you for getting into college? Yes Is Selected

Q78 Which individual(s) from your church helped you? (Select all that apply.)
❑ Pastor/Priest (1)
❑ Adult church members (2)
❑ Church friends (3)
❑ Youth group pastor/leader (4)
❑ Choir director (5)
❑ Sunday school teacher (6)
❑ Other (7) _____

Q79 How would you describe the racial composition of the high school you last attended or graduated from? (Please mark one in each row)

	Mostly non-White (1)	Half White (2)	Mostly White (3)
High school last attended (1)	❍	❍	❍
Most of your classes during high school (2)	❍	❍	❍

Q80 During high school, do you feel that you were treated fairly by your

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Guidance counselors (1)	❍	❍
Teachers (3)	❍	❍

Q81 During high school, do you feel that other Latina/o students at your school were treated fairly by

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Guidance counselors (1)	❍	❍
Teachers (2)	❍	❍

Q82 Did you ever endure racial discrimination (i.e., racial slurs, ridicule, harassment, racial bias, avoidance, etc.) from any of the following during high school:

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Guidance counselors (1)	❍	❍
Teachers (2)	❍	❍
Students (3)	❍	❍

Q83 Did you ever feel that you had to assimilate or act "White" in order to be accepted in high school?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q84 During high school, how often did you experience racial discrimination?

- ❍ Never (1)
- ❍ Rarely (2)
- ❍ Sometimes (3)
- ❍ Often (4)
- ❍ Always (5)

Answer If During high school, how often did you experience racial discrimination? Never Is Not Selected

Q85 How did your experiences of racial discrimination impact your desire to attend college?

- ❍ The experiences encouraged me to attend college. (1)
- ❍ The experiences discouraged me from attending college. (2)
- ❍ It did not make a difference in my desire to attend college. (3)

APPENDIX D:

Institutional Cooperation Request

GATEKEEPER COOPERATION REQUEST – INSTITUTIONAL

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Treva Gear and I am a doctoral candidate in the Adult and Career Education program at Valdosta State University. I am conducting a research study in order to fulfill the requirements of my doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to identify resources and supports that Latina high school graduates in Georgia have used to successfully transition to higher education. I am contacting your college/university because you had a Latina/o student enrollment of at least 4% in the 2014 Fall Semester.

I am writing to request your permission to recruit Latina undergraduate students from your college/university for this study. If permitted to do so, I will need your permission to use the student e-mail listserv to invite students to participate, send the survey link, and send reminders. Participants in this research study will only be asked to complete a 15-20 minute online survey. I have attached a copy of the online survey that will be sent to potential participants.

The online survey will be sent to the participant's e-mail address in a hyperlink using Qualtrics survey software. The survey will be sent in the 2015 Fall Semester and will be open for 7-10 days. Qualtrics uses a Security Socket Layer (SSL), which encrypts survey information as a data protection measure. Participation will be voluntary and participants can end their participation at any time without penalty. No identifying information will be collected from participants. Upon completion of the research study all e-mail lists will be destroyed.

The participants in the study will not receive any compensation for their participation. Their input will help institutional agents in Georgia at the high school and college levels understand the transition experiences of Latinas. If you grant permission for me to recruit students from your college/university I will send you a copy of the research findings upon the completion of the research study.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request. I have attached copies of the IRB exemption form, consent forms, and the survey questions to be used in the study for your review. I hope that your institution will help add to the limited body of knowledge on how Georgia's Latina high school graduates make the transition to higher education. Please remember that the focus of this study is on Latina experiences that occurred prior to attending your college/university. If you have further questions about this research study, please contact me at (229) 630-7752 or via e-mail at tygear@valdosta.edu, or Dr. Reynaldo Martinez at (229) 333-5650 or via e-mail at rlmartinez@valdosta.edu.

Sincerely,
Treva Yulonda Gear
Doctoral Candidate, Valdosta State University
Valdosta, GA 31602
tygear@valdosta.edu

APPENDIX E:

Organization Cooperation Request

GATEKEEPER COOPERATION REQUEST - ORGANIZATION

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Treva Gear and I am a doctoral candidate in the Adult and Career Education program at Valdosta State University. I am conducting a research study in order to fulfill the requirements of my doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to identify the resources and supports Latina high school graduates in Georgia have used to successfully transition to higher education. I am contacting your organization because your college/university had a Latina/o student enrollment of at least 4% in the Fall 2014 Semester. Your college/university IRB has reviewed my research and has given me permission to recruit participants for this research study.

I am writing to request your participation and assistance with recruiting Latina undergraduate students for this study. I understand that your organization's purpose is aligned with the empowerment of Latina/o students, which is also the purpose of my research study. Your organization's participation in this study will help add to the body of knowledge because very little research concerning Latina/o educational resources and supports has been conducted in the state of Georgia.

If your organization agrees to participate in this study, I will only need you to encourage your members' participation. You can help by directing them to the weekly campus e-mail containing the survey, placing the survey link on your organization's website, sending the survey link to your members, as well as reminders; or providing me with a member e-mail distribution list so that I can send the survey link and reminders. Participants in this research study will only be asked to complete a 15-20 minute online survey.

The online survey will be sent to the participant's campus e-mail address in a hyperlink using Qualtrics survey software. The survey will be launched on August 24th, and will be open for 7-10 days. Qualtrics uses a Security Socket Layer (SSL), which encrypts survey information as a data protection measure. Participation will be voluntary and participants can end their participation at any time without penalty. No identifying information will be collected from participants. Upon completion of this research study all e-mail lists will be destroyed.

The participants in the study will not receive any compensation for their participation. Your organization's participation will help institutional agents in Georgia at the high school and college levels better understand the transition experiences of Latinas. If you grant permission for me to recruit students from your organization I will send you a copy of the research findings upon the completion of the study.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request. I have attached copies of the IRB exemption protocol and the survey questions to be used in the study for your review. I hope that your organization will help add to the limited body of knowledge on how Georgia's Latina high school graduates make the transition to higher education. If you

have further questions about this research study, please contact me at (229) 630-7752 or via e-mail at tygear@valdosta.edu, or Dr. Reynaldo L. Martinez, Jr. at (229) 333-5650.

Sincerely,

Treva Yulonda Gear
Doctoral Candidate, Valdosta State University
Valdosta, GA 31602
tygear@valdosta.edu

APPENDIX F:

Survey Email

SURVEY E-MAIL

Title: Sí Se Puede!: Increasing Latina College Enrollment

Queridas amigas,

If you are a Latina undergraduate student and you graduated from or last attended a high school in Georgia, I need your help. My name is Treva Gear and I'm a doctoral student here at Valdosta State University. I'm conducting research to find out how to help Latina high school students in Georgia get into college.

Though Georgia has the tenth largest Latina/o population in the United States, very little is known about how this population reaches higher education in Georgia. In reality, only a small percentage of Latinas in Georgia actually transition to a college/university after high school graduation. I seek your help in bringing attention to this issue in order to help future Latina high school graduates transition to college.

In order to help, I am asking that you complete a 15-25 minute survey. The survey will ask you about who or what helped you get into college. Your responses will be anonymous and no identifying information will be requested from you. Please click on the link below to begin. I appreciate your help with this study. If you like, I can share the results of the survey once it has been analyzed. Just send me an email expressing your interest in the results. The survey will be open until September 6th.

Muchisimas gracias y que tengas un lindo dia.

Click on the link to take the survey**:**
Take the Survey

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
https://valdosta.co1.qualtrics.com/SE?SID=SV_b1xsb5R0vRqoNqR&Q_CHL=email&Preview=Survey

VSU has approved your participation. If you have questions about this survey please contact Treva Gear at tygear@valdosta.edu or (229) 630-7752, or the VSU Institutional Review Board at irb@valdosta.edu or (229) 259-5450. Thank you in advance for participating.

Sincerely,
Treva Gear
Valdosta State University
(229) 630-7752

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
Click here to unsubscribe

APPENDIX G:

Focus Group Recruitment E-mail

FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

Buenas Tardes Amigas,

If you are a Latina undergraduate student and you graduated from or last attended a high school in Georgia, I need your help. My name is Treva Gear and I am a doctoral student here at Valdosta State University. As you may know, I am conducting research to find out how to help Latina high school students in Georgia get into college.

Thank you so much for participating in the Latina Survey back in August. As I review findings from the survey, I need your help to gain a deeper understanding of the results. This study cannot be effectively conducted without your voice; your opinion; your feedback.

As you may know, the purpose of this research study is to identify the best practices for transitioning Latinas in Georgia from high school to higher education. Your input will help institutional agents in Georgia at the high school and college levels understand the transition experiences of Latinas. This information is intended to guide the transition practices at both levels by revealing which transition services are received or needed. Ultimately, your participation will help future Latina high school graduates in Georgia receive the services and supports necessary to get into college.

As a participant in the focus group discussion, you will be asked about your experience transitioning from high school to college. The focus group session will last 1-2 hours and will be conducted on VSU's campus. You will receive a $10.00 Wal-mart gift card for participating. Snacks and beverages will also be served during the focus group.

If you would like to participate in the focus group please let me know which days of the week, and which afternoon or evening hours are best for you on those days. This information will allow me to schedule a time for the meeting that is best for everyone. If you know other Latinas (females) who attend VSU and graduated from a high school in Georgia please tell them about the focus group. If they are interested, tell them to contact me by email or phone. I need 5-8 people for this focus group study.

VSU has approved your participation. If you have any questions about the details of the study, please feel free to contact me, Treva Gear, at tygear@valdosta.edu or (229) 630-7752, or the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (229) 259-5045. Thank you for your consideration.

Muchas gracias,

Treva Gear
Doctoral Candidate
Valdosta State University
(229) 630-7752

APPENDIX H:

Focus Group Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT - FOCUS GROUP

Investigator

My name is Treva Gear and I am a doctoral student at Valdosta State University. I am conducting this research study under the supervision of Dr. Reynaldo L. Martinez, Jr.

Purpose of the Study

I am conducting a research study to find out what types of resources and supports Latinas graduating from high schools in Georgia use to access higher education.

Description of the Study

As a participant in this research study you will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion in which you will be asked about your experience transitioning from high school to college. There will be other Latinas from your school participating as well. The focus group session will last 1-2 hours. The session will be held at a location on your campus. The session will be audio recorded for the purpose of data collection and analysis.

Risks or Discomforts

There are no known risks or discomfort associated with your participation in this focus group.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to ensure the confidentiality of your responses on behalf of the researcher. You will be required to select a fictitious name that will be used during the focus group session to maintain confidentiality and attain a level of anonymity. I cannot guarantee complete confidentiality, because other individuals in the group discussion will hear your responses and you will hear theirs. All focus group participants will be asked to respect the confidentiality of each other by not discussing responses made during the focus group outside of the focus group setting.

Findings from the focus group session will be used solely for research purposes and may be published. The fictitious name that you provide will be used in all transcripts, analyses, and reports involved in the research study. Audio recordings will only be reviewed by members of the research team for the purpose of transcription and analysis. During the research process all data will be stored in a locked file cabinet. All computer records will be kept on a password-protected computer, as well as on a password protected external hard drive. After the research study is complete, all data and files will be maintained for five years and then destroyed.

Benefits of the Study

This study cannot be effectively conducted without your voice; your opinion; your feedback. Your input will help institutional agents in Georgia at the high school and college levels understand the transition experiences of Latinas. This information is intended to guide the transition practices at both levels by revealing which transition services are received or needed. Ultimately, your participation will help future Latina high school graduates in Georgia receive the services and supports necessary to transition to higher education.

Incentives

Participants in the study will be given a $10.00 gift card for participating in the study. Snacks and beverages will also be available to participants during the focus group.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in the study is voluntary and you have the option to end your participation at any time. There are no adverse results to ending your participation.

Questions About the Study

If you have any questions or concerns about the details of the study, please feel free to contact one or more of the individuals indicated below, or the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (229-259-5045). We will be happy to answer any questions that you have about the study.

Treva Y. Gear
Principal Investigator
tygear@valdosta.edu
(229) 630-7752

Dr. Reynaldo L. Martinez, Jr.
Dissertation Advisor
rlmartinez@valdosta.edu
(229) 333-5650

Please **initial** below if you have read the informed consent, understand the purpose of the research study, understand your rights as a study participant, and agree to participate in the focus group.

_____ I agree to participate in the focus group study. I understand that my responses will be audio recorded. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can end my participation at any time. I understand my human rights as a participant.

Fictitious Name (alias): _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX I:

Focus Group Questionnaire

Focus Group Questionnaire

1) Pseudonym: _____

2) Age: _____

3) College: _____

4) High school graduated from: _____

5) Year of high school graduation: _____

6) Type of high school (circle one): Public Magnet Private religious Private college prep

7) College Status (circle one): Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

8) Type of financial aid received to first attend college (select all that apply):
- Pell Grant
- HOPE scholarship
- Student Loans
- Parents/Family
- Self payment
- Other scholarships _____

10) Highest academic degree desired:
- Associates degree
- Bachelors degree
- Masters degree
- Ph.D. or Ed.D. (Doctorate)
- M.D., D.O. (Medicine)
- J.D. (Law)
- B.D. or M.DIV. (Divinity)

11) When did you first decide that you wanted to go to college?
- I have always wanted to go to college
- Elementary/primary school
- Middle school
- High school

12) What is your place of birth?

- United States
- Mexico
- Guatemala
- El Salvador
- Puerto Rico
- Dominican Republic
- Cuba
- Other_____

13) What is family's country of origin? _____

14) Please **check** the highest level of education that your mother/female guardian and father/male guardian completed.

	Primary	Middle School	Some High School	High School Diploma/GED	Some College	Associates Degree	Bachelors Degree	Masters Degree or Higher
Mother/female guardian								
Father/male guardian								

15) Are you the first in your family to attend college?

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX J:

Georgia Map Showing Counties of Participants' High Schools

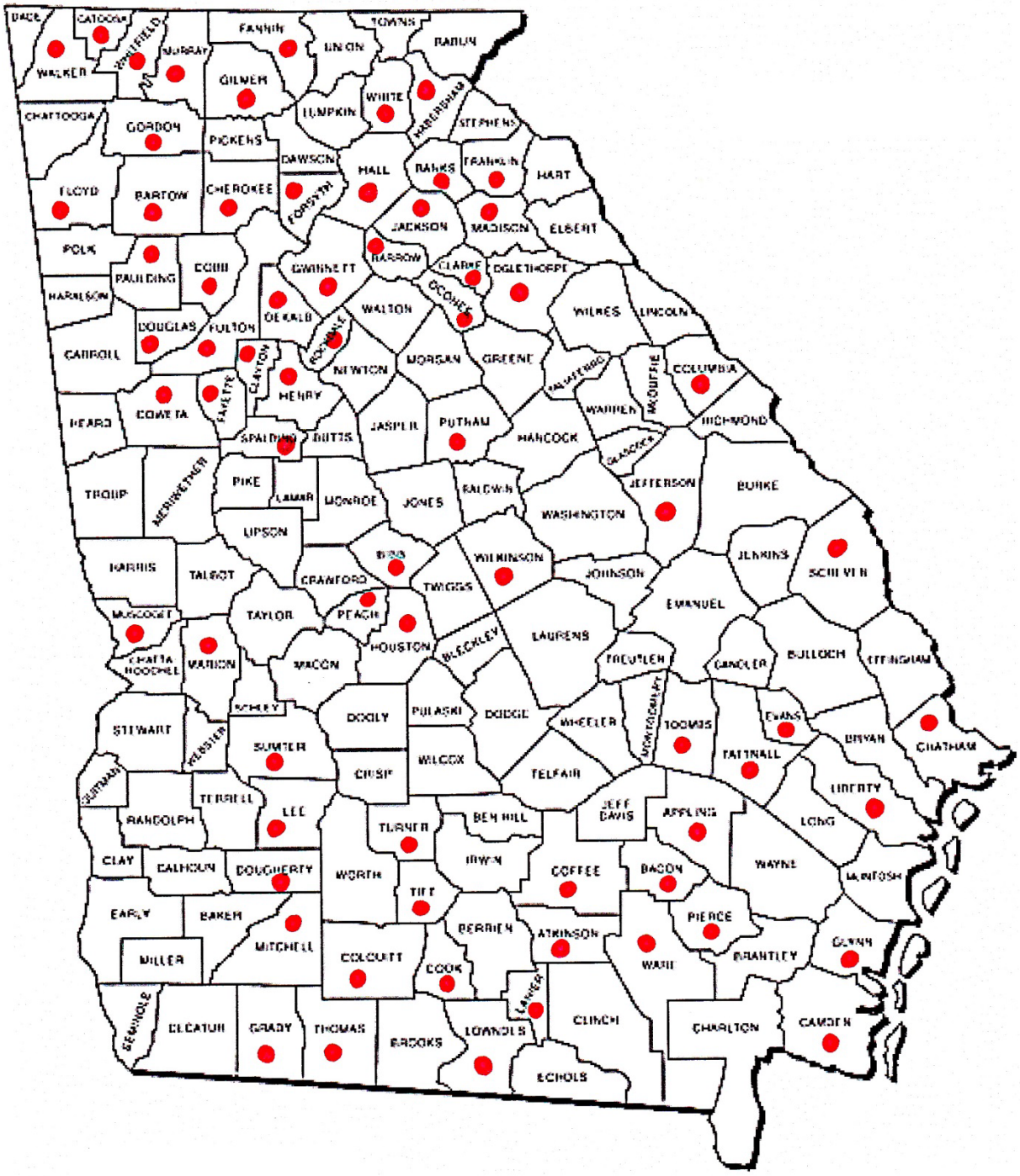

Figure J. Georgia state map showing the showing the county locations of the high schools that Latina survey participants graduated from.

APPENDIX K:

College Information Received through Extracurricular Activities and Volunteerism

College Information Received through Extracurricular Activities and Volunteerism

Participated/Received Info	Extracurricular	*f*	Volunteerism	*f*
Participated				
Yes	85.2%	427	62.0%	310
No	14.8%	74	38.0%	190
Total	100.0%	501	100.0%	500
Received College Information				
Yes	47.3%	201	19.0%	59
No	52.7%	224	81.0%	251
Total	100.0%	425	100.0%	310

APPENDIX L:

Individual Who Provided Information About College Preparation Program

Individual Who Provided Information About College Preparation Program

Individual	Frequency	Percentage
Teacher	11	36.7%
Guidance counselor	4	13.3%
Program recruiter	3	10.0%
Club advisor	2	6.7%
Friends	2	6.7%
Pre-selected by school	2	6.7%
Word of mouth	2	6.7%
Relative	1	3.3%
Siblings	1	3.3%
Letter	1	3.3%
Do not remember	1	3.3%

APPENDIX M:

Provided Most Help With Application Process Leading to College Admission

Provided Most Help With Application Process Leading to College Admission

Individual	Frequency	Percentage
Parents/Guardians	205	40.8%
Friends	177	35.3%
Teacher	173	34.5%
Brother/Sister	135	26.9%
High school counselor	134	26.7%
Classmates	104	20.7%
Relatives	88	17.5%
No one helped	85	16.9%
College Recruiter	55	11.0%
Mentor	36	7.2%
Club Advisor	24	4.8%
Sports Coach	20	4.0%
College Preparatory Program	17	3.4%
Migrant Education Counselor	16	3.2%
Principal or Assistant Principal	8	1.6%
Other		
College counselor at school	2	0.4%
I helped myself the most	2	0.4%
College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) Recruiter	1	0.2%
College fairs	1	0.2%
Dual enrollment	1	0.2%
Financial aid office	1	0.2%
Parents of friends	1	0.2%
IB Academic Advisor	1	0.2%
Internet	1	0.2%
Military Recruiter	1	0.2%
Private violin teacher	1	0.2%
Total	1,293	257.6%

Note. All survey participants responded to this item (N=502).

APPENDIX N:

Individual or Entity Who was Especially Helpful to Getting into College

Individual or Entity Who was Especially Helpful to Getting into College

Individual	Frequency	Percentage
Parents/Guardians	278	55.4%
Friends	197	39.2%
Teacher	170	33.9%
Brother/Sister	147	29.3%
High school counselor	111	22.1%
Relatives	101	20.1%
Classmates	90	17.9%
No one	58	11.6%
Mentor	36	7.2%
College Recruiter	30	6.0%
Club Advisor	22	4.4%
Sports Coach	19	3.8%
Migrant Education Counselor	9	1.8%
College preparatory program	8	1.6%
Principal or Assistant Principal	8	1.6%
God	2	0.4%
Husband	2	0.4%
Band director	1	0.2%
CAMP Recruiter	1	0.2%
Church member	1	0.2%
College admissions staff	1	0.2%
Employer	1	0.2%
Friends' parents	1	0.2%
Internet	1	0.2%
Migrant workers	1	0.2%
Private violin teacher	1	0.2%
Total	1300	259.9%

Note. All survey participants responded to this item (N=502).

APPENDIX O:

Parent/Guardians' Level of Education

Parent/Guardians' Level of Education

Education Level	Mother/Female Guardian[a]	Father/Male Guardian[b]
Graduate degree or higher	5.9%	7.0%
Bachelors degree	13.6%	9.3%
Associates degree	5.9%	4.0%
Some college	12.1%	9.9%
High school diploma/GED	13.6%	13.3%
Some high school	11.3%	17.8%
Middle school/junior high	19.4%	17.8%
Elementary/primary school	18.2%	20.9%

Note. [a]N = 494. [b]N = 473.

APPENDIX P:

Services or Support That Would Have Helped Make a Smoother Transition to College

Services or Support That Would Have Helped Make a Smoother Transition to College

Service or Support	*f*	%
More information about financial aid/scholarships	345	69.7%
Help preparing the FAFSA and other financial aid paperwork	289	58.4%
Help preparing for the SAT or ACT	256	51.7%
More information about college requirements	251	50.7%
College visits	225	45.5%
Help preparing college applications	213	43.0%
High school counselor support	212	42.8%
More information about admissions exams (ACT/SAT)	186	37.6%
Mentors	143	28.9%
Teacher support	125	25.3%
Parent support	124	25.1%
Other	19	4.2%
More financial assistance/support	3	0.6%
Help picking best college for field of study	3	0.6%
Career development assistance/help deciding on a career	2	0.4%
Long-term career/educational planning	2	0.4%
Financial/money counseling	1	0.2%
Having someone that understood how my experience would be different from the upper middle class, crazy smart students I was surrounded by	1	0.2%
Help figuring out the college going process	1	0.2%
Progress updates on admissions and grades	1	0.2%
More information about college programs of study	1	0.2%
Programs specifically aimed at underrepresented students	1	0.2%
Someone to encourage me	1	0.2%
Study skills being taught and addressed in high school	1	0.2%
Talking to college students about what to expect	1	0.2%

Note. N = 495. Seven participants did not respond to Question 61.

APPENDIX Q:

Obstacles to Higher Education

Obstacles to Higher Education for Latina High School Graduates

Themes	References
Money for college	292
Lack of information	41
Transportation	23
Admission exams	21
Grade point average	18
Citizenship issues	16
Attitude	15
Lack of support	15
Family problems	10
Working	10
Health issues	6
Children/Childcare	4
Family responsibilities	4
Pregnancy	4
Deadlines	3
Distance from home	3
English language	3
Family illness/death	3
Relationship issues	3
Undecided on career	3
Discouraged by others	2
Fear	2
Low self-esteem	2
Not accepted at college of choice	2
Racial discrimination	2
Traumatic experiences	2
Controlling parents	1
Discipline issues	1
Internet access – limited	1
Job opportunities	1
Lack of academic club participation	1
Lack of adequate help in class	1
Not graduating from high school	1
Recommendation letters	1

Note. N = 443.